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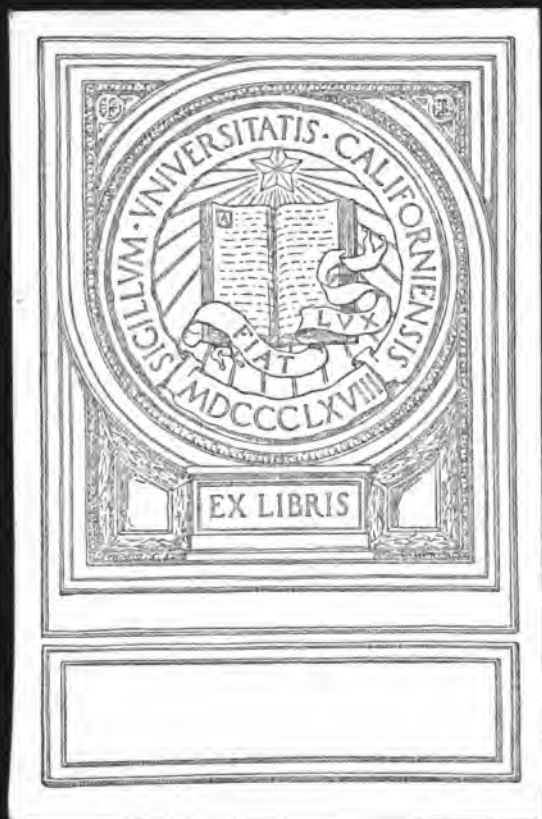
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The Guardian.



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THE GUARDIAN,

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Diversion.



FRANCIS L. VINTON.
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NEW YORK:

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TO YHAI
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DEDICATION

TO

Elisabeth M. Vinton.

Non, ce n'est pas par la beauté
Que cet hommage est digne de toi ;
Ah plût aux muses qu'il eût le droit
De t'être dédié :

Mais c'est le coeur qui l'inspirait ;
Et même à la séance des Dieux,
Au coeur qui offre de son mieux
Beaucoup est pardonné.

OVERTURE.



OVERTURE.

I.

ONCE for my sins, which never seem to mend,
My leech prescribed the Tropics, and I went ;
One cheerless bore came down to see me wend,
And every man to whom I ow'd a cent ;
They laughed and said, " Good-bye my dearest friend,
I hope you wont meet any accident.
Your ship looks leaky, and the season's late,
But one drowned bachelor is nothing to the State."

II.

" What ! you don't think ? " " Oh no ! she may be tight,
Although her seams—Well, have a jolly time ;
My word ! I feel myself, like taking flight,
To spend the winter in a warmer clime,
But I've no chance to play the sybarite :
By George sir, now-a-days to make a dime,
A gentleman must labor like a beaver ;
Well, well adieu, don't go and catch the yellow fever."

III.

Now I'm a northern man, and proud to say
I've always eaten good bread and fresh meat,
Nay more, how often in a simple way,
Meeting a hungry friend upon the street,
Have I not dined on Bisque and Verzenay !
Besides, I always kept my person neat
And never dreamed what microscopic fauna,
The sun engenders in an equatorial corner.

IV.

Arrived, however, in the torrid zone,
I underwent a total change of table—
Beef will not keep, and mutton is not known ;
Moreover, there, it is no poet's fable,
"That when alone one is the least alone,"
For night is all one tipulary Babel,
Whose legions flock, exceptionably frantic,
Just at that nature's hour which ought to be romantic.

V.

As for the Moon, 'tis not so very splendid—
I've seen a better often in Lucia.
If Humboldt saw the planets as I then did,
His "Cosmos" must be somewhat insincere ;
I did believe, until my views extended,
That our's was a tame portion of the sphere,
But now I think these latitudes will answer ;
There is no first-class life 'twixt Capricorn and Cancer.

VI.

The scenery is not the kind to wear,
 'Tis too monotonous for eyes like mine ;
I hate an everlasting verdant glare,
 Not shining nobly like the northern pine ;
Where is the winter with his tonic air
 That makes the blood as warm and strong as wine,
Where snow robed nature, pure and lovely blonde,
The spring of promise, and the summer doubly fond ?

VII.

The land is fertile, it will bring forth weeds
 High as your head before you've hoed an acre,
But yet no later than you plant good seeds
 Down comes a rainstorm, like an ocean breaker,
And what that leaves, some worm or insect greeds ;
 But there's good farming for an undertaker,
For what with fevers, choleras, and snakes,
Nature does bless the ground which that sad planter breaks.

VIII.

Yes, I detest the very name of tropic,
 And with good reason ; but you ask me why,
If that be so, I introduce the topic ;
 That, bless you, I'll explain, and not half try.
Deem me not cynical nor misanthropic,
 But I've a bit of scandal, slightly high
From too long keeping, all about that region—
Not so strong flavored though, as some of the Norwegian.

IX.

I found a friend, as casual friends are found,
 (As good ones may be, too, in any place,)
To whom with some affection I grew bound ;
 Not for an empty charm of form or face,
Nor that regalias and sherry sound,
 Supply a host with more than usual grace,
But that he had a pleasing mental fashion,
And also won the heart through masculine compassion.

X.

For in his youth my friend was crossed in love,
 Such are the ripest, sweetest, souls in nature.
These do combine the serpent and the dove,
 And ought to have a special nomenclature ;
They are not angels, yet they rise above
 Our weaknesses, and passion's legislature —
They stand apart, or stand in two conditions,
Like Jane of Arc, or Rome, or soft-sexed Politicians.

XI.

Women confide in them, and so do men,
 And that's the way they get to be so knowing,
They are a type to study now and then ;
 Like the cut balsam, healed by its own flowing,
They hide their wounds in amber from the ken,
 And by degrees their agony outgrowing,
They wax in portly vigor none the worse
For bearing singly blest, their portion of earth's curse.

XII.

My friend once told me this forthcoming story,
I heard, remembered, put it into rhyme,
Then looked it through and took an inventory
Of all the parts that seemed to me sublime,
Those I cut out, and banished, *con dolore* ;
Ah ! 'twas an expiation for my crime,
Who like the rhymer knows the pang of duty,
When he must put the knife to his convicted beauty ?

XIII.

We sat together smoking our Havanas,
One pleasant eve, and I, for lack of thought,
Seeing some blacks, in white and pied bandanas,
Weltering in rays, the last the landscape caught,
Said, " Friend, this is a country of odd manners,
A feudal place where slaves are sold and bought,
A focus of development and blight,
Fertile in tragedies that never see the light."

XIV.

" Tell me a story. See the night draws nigh,
The stars commence to twinkle through the blue,
The shades have lengthened to infinity,
' The Heavens are telling,' and 'tis time for you ;
This purple hour is romance to the eye,
Nature is in imagination's hue,
Kindle your puro with this cedar blaze,
Then fire your legend with the ' light of other days.'"

XV.

"I will," he said, "My drama is all made,
And yonder ruin, branded on the sky,
Which blots the evening with disastrous shade,
Still marks the limits where my scene shall lie ;
How fair was then that broken down arcade,
How strong those walls which now to breezes ply,
How bright those lawns, with beauty only wild,
Now all a wilderness forsaken or defiled.

XVI.

When that black wreck had color, life and form,
There, dwelt three spirits, loveliest of our land ;
Three women, brilliant, generous and warm,
All born by genius to a world's command :
Yet ruling lightly o'er the social swarm,
They lived for art, with married heart and hand,
And skilled in ways of illustrating thought,
Knew how to fix each form that subtle fancy caught.

XVII.

Two were own sisters—In their nobler veins,
The tide was our immortal Saxon stream ;
The third was fair, but shared a blood that stains,
Though so diffused within the finer gleam,
That bright as air when not a cloud remains,
No pallor of a vapor stricken beam,
Nor lurid crimson tinged her candid face—
Her heart alone accused the wildness of her race.

XVIII.

Born of a slave, but exquisitely fair,
Her beauty so enfranchised her from bond,
That she was bred to freedom unaware,
And none remembered, and none looked beyond :
The easy consorts never deigned to care,
The course was common and the girl was blonde,
And one quick season when the spouses died,
Left her co-heiress in her sisters' name and pride.

XIX.

One only knew, at least remembered yet,
The stigma that she innocently bore—
A Carib nurse, upon whose breast of jet
The girls were laid (as custom was of yore.)
She fed them all, the elder and cadette,
Yet scorned the last, whose genius more and more
Usurped the glory only fitly worn
By those patrician free—first to the manor born.

XX.

Estates of worth, of cocoa, coffee, cane,
And mills, and slaves, reverted to the three,
Far as the eye could range, o'er hill and plain,
The earth was theirs to use as well as see ;
But they asked not, accustomed so to reign,
How vast the breadth of their domain might be ;
This to their Guardian's share they set apart,
And made their only care, Love, Liberty, and Art.

XXI.

This Guardian was a various minded man,
Who roamed the world and left his wards to grow,
His visits ceased as soon as they began,
And short accounts were all he deigned to know ;
But still they prospered on that simple plan,
And now he neither seemed to come or go.
Thus years had passed since last he left his charge,
Three blushing buds of life on fortune's garden marge.

XXII.

Meanwhile they bloomed fair women, and in time
Where'er they moved they magnetized the way ;
Courtly, but with indifference sublime,
They saw the world impassioned homage pay.
They gave their balls, made music, sketch and rhyme,
Refused a lover, gained a friend each day,
And ever amiable, by all adored,
They made our golden age no more to be restored.

XXIII.

The moon shines cold on yonder ruined walls,
The glossy lizard, bright eyed and alert,
Shoots through the fissures, and the beetle crawls
With stupid instinct through decay and dirt ;
And humid lichens creep along the halls
Where flowers were spread, which beauty's flying skirt
Swept in the dance, too volatile to bruise,
But eddying gusty perfumes from their cells recluse.

XXIV.

A night like this those windows high and low,
Had jetted light more warm than that pale beam,
Sweet talk had wafted on the zephyr's flow,
And music in its exquisite extreme ;
There, gentle guests had wandered to and fro,
Flitting to shades like figures of a dream,
And many an ear with fond acuteness heard
The eolian breath of love thrill each melodious word.

XXV.

Now, silence is the music of the dead,
No perfumes from their desert gardens float,
Their guests are ghosts, their latest dance is led ;
No more those lips the name of love may quote
On whose last sigh, through flame and blood it fled
Their life's expression and their requiem note ;
They perished as they lived, in one fate blent,
And yon dim ruin stands their only monument.



CANTO I.



THE GUARDIAN.

CANTO I.

I.

ALONE, at midnight, by a blazing lamp
The Guardian read, then thrust the book away,
And leaned upon his hand a face, whose stamp
Was worthy of a Vinci to portray—
Though, if the lines of closet or of camp
Were deepest marked, could Vinci hardly say ;
Now, saddest doubt drooped on his eyelids pale,
Now, impulse seemed to flash and lighten through the vail.

II.

He rose, and gazed out on the silent night ;
The dappled moon shot on the distant wave,
And dainty stars with vacillating light,
And planets with their radiance clear and grave—
Unsullied orbs, appearing to the sight
And shining equally on lord and slave
There cloudless moved, and graced the awful force
Which urged their beauteous beams and unrelaxing course.

III.

The sea was mute, nought but the nightly breeze
Gliding to ocean from the cooling land
Rippled the air, and whispered to the trees ;
The Orange answered, and the light cane wand,
The palm leaves rustled in subdued degrees,
And spiral vines, through every tendril fanned,
Responded with a myriad sighs, whose thrill
Made silence audible and yet more sweetly still.

IV.

"'Tis not the night," he said, "to still my heart,
The stars here do not scintillate, they burn ;
Why, when my youth is turning to depart,
How, from the past that ash replenished urn,
Have I preserved such embers quick to start ;
Can it be love that menaces return,
And can I dare to welcome to my breast
At my dry age this known, incendiary guest ?"

V.

And yet no sooner on this pent up shore,
A world-wide traveler and grey in life,
Than I behold what I ne'er saw before,
The woman I desire to make my wife ;
And then, as if my fate must furnish more,
To set my reason and my heart at strife,
She proves my ward, almost a babe I've known,
Where are the schools to-day, or faith, has time so flown ?

VI.

Are not these loves Cassandre, at my age,
Sure signs of weakness, surer marks for scorn ?
Not all perhaps—nay, love becomes a sage,
Still on the oak the twining vine is borne
While his last limbs can scarce the storm engage ;
Besides, the suit is not entirely worn,
I've lived in motley for so long a part,
I sure can pass for new, the costume of my heart.

VII.

My title though must travesty my years,
I am a guardian, though a careless one,
A name more apt to rouse a maiden's fears,
Or wake the wit of some good neighbor's son,
Than to evoke an image that endears
And win my battle ere it is begun ;
Well, up on fate, and down with borrowed sorrow,
I'll pen a proper note and dine with them to-morrow.

VIII.

And time it is.—To whom is this addressed
This owl-like wisdom ? Only to the moon,
And she, too bright with mortal to contest,
Goes passing voiceless from night's silver noon,
And droops with impulse to the hollow west ;
The quill, 'tis written, not a stroke too soon,
For though the flame may scorch, the light betray,
I must approach the blaze which shows the only way.

IX.

Phœbus advancing on the mountain tops
Still touched the valleys with uncertain aim,
Still the magnolia, with diamond drops,
Was faceted when Carolina came ;
Now, by the lake, the ranging maiden stops,
Now plucks a myrtle, rends the pearly frame,
And speeds the leaflets, singing while they fall,
The rondo light—" He loves, with passion, not at all."

X.

"What ! stripping myrtles," said her sister's voice.
"Look at my fate" said Caroline, "and fear.
Why do these bad ones always mark my choice ?"
"They only prove that you are wanted here,
And were I you," said Anna, "I'd rejoice ;
But breakfast waits your deigning to appear,
Come, household discipline is what you need,
And learn that I have turned reformer in that creed."

XI.

"Quite at your service Anna, I admire
With glance prophetic the reforms you'll make,
For one beginning let us all conspire,
And rise at dawn to walk around the lake ;
So brightest eyes shall we three girls acquire"—
"Oh ! love," said Anna, "I could never wake,
I am the stillest just when night is gone,
And prize above all dreams those vivid ones of dawn."

XII.

"Then make our board the victim of reform,
Coffee is nervous, as all doctors know,
Except our own who dreads the panic storm
That you would raise if he should call it so ;
And meat is worse because it makes you warm,
Now roots, and dew, would make the pure blood flow."
"Nay, that's too radical for me to venture,
Retrench in something else—I can't resign the trencher."

XIII.

"What shall it be then—Dress ?" "Ah ! there's the place,
'Tis our great weakness, we're too fond of dress ;
Suppose we sell the moiety of our lace,
And build the government a ship express ;
The thought is grand, the ship our names will grace,
And we be famous, yet content no less."
"Not yet" said Anne, "that's only fair for you,
Your charms demand no aid, my less attractions do."

XIV.

"In short there's nothing I desire to change ;
Habit is ten times nature thorough bred,
So wet thy feet, the dripping herbage range,
And be my morning glory comforted."
"My bosom full of posies sweet and strange,
On thine, for that sweet word my hand will shed,
Accept my spoil delightful heart and mind,
And when I love thee not, then say my soul is blind."

XV.

So turning home the white robed maidens swept,
 And reached a window open to the ground,
 Through cloven foam of blossoms in they stepped,
 And at a spirit flame their sister found.
 "A genius making coffee, I accept,"
 Cried Carolina,—Dian turned around,
 She smiled, she stretched her arms with welcome sweet,
 And all threesprang to blend like dew-drops when they meet.

XVI.

"What kisses sweet you give, like morning air,
 You two tea roses ; earlier must I rise,
 For time is coming when I should beware,
 Being the eldest, lest to my surprise,
 My cycles greet me soon with silver hair,
 And venerable glasses on dim eyes,
 A premature decay for want of will
 To ope at dewy dawn and trail on yonder hill."

XVII.

"Fear not Diana," Carolina said,
 "You gain in fairness what you lose in bloom,
 And I shall judge that love himself is dead,
 When you please not." "Ah ! how can you presume
 With such a speech to turn my feeble head
 You flatterer, your Dante tells your doom,
 And if I wish your willing words were true,
 'Tis only traitor for the sake of saving you."

XVIII.

"But I forget, here are your letters all,
To Anne, the rose ; to Caroline, the blue :
I trust in hope no evil will befall
From all these painted, scented, billets-doux."
"No more than from that lemon-colored scrawl,"
Said Anna, "which I see addressed to you,
Nay less, for yellow if I know the fashion,
Means jealousy, despair, or some such gothic passion."

XIX.

"'Tis business, doubtless, our attorney writes,
His style is florid ; but see this I pray,
'Tis cool and classic, yet the hand invites—
The island post ! What can this letter say ?
My poor heart flutters with forewarned delights,
This does arouse me some unusual way,
Oh ! it attracts, I'm curious I vow,
Though I am seldom that, you know, and must allow."

XX.

"'Tis from our Guardian, short and strangely sweet,
He cometh homeward, and he condescends
To write, advising us of that great feat.
What gale this time that mossy cocoa bends ?
He asks an hour his lovely wards to greet ;
Besides, some northern grouse in ice he sends."
"Ask him to dine for that, of course I would,
The dear old Phoenix, if his frozen grouse is good."

XXI.

“Who is our Guardian, may I beg to know?”
Said Carolina.—“Some Cosmopolite
With whom our father years and years ago
Formed an acquaintance, probably by night;
I’ve heard say he was very handsome, though,
That must have been before you saw the light,
For once I viewed him, ages past, and then
He looked the coldest, oldest, ugliest of men.

XXII.

Yet he’s obliging as you feel and see,
Quite generous enough though not too fond,
He thinks we’re children yet, and that may be,
Little I care to step that age beyond;
He travels much and, also, let me see,
Draws, or writes music, which, I wont respond;
Then he’s a chemist, and once had a patent,
For utilizing something that was lost or latent.”

XXIII.

“Upon my word the subject grows profound,”
Said Carolina, “let me then elope,
Last night I dreamed a world of sweetest sound,
The words are gone, the motive lives in hope,
Which I may grasp, though like Prometheus bound
I fear my heart will feel the falcon grope;
But ah! those strains, the fantasies of night,
Like all the classic ghosts do fade with morning’s light.”

XXIV.

So to the organ Carolina passed,
And made the keys with new accords vibrate.
"Is that your dream," said Anna, "did it last?"
"All night my love!" "Well, then you supped too late,
There's cream and mangoes in that minor blast,
And that diminished ninth was on your plate;
It lacks the gastric, sister, one advice,
Prepare your future dreams on something not so nice."

XXV.

"What speechless! then will I compose, to-day,
I have a pencil and a dream I think,
Begin my muse thy heavy wings to sway;
There now she lifts them, poises on the brink,
There now she rises, now she floats away,
Hail muse! obedient to thy slightest wink
I follow after, going, gone,—I fly;
Adieu Diana, Caroline my dove, good bye."

XXVI.

"To-day," Diana said, "I bear the care,
I keep the house, to you the arts I leave,
But I should be the last of all to spare,
And more than all, must praise and smiles receive,
For where were art, and all your passion where?
If dinner followed not upon the eve,
Thin dreams and pageants, unsubstantial tricks,
For sprites which must consume a turtle steak at six."

XXVII.

"In that remark materialism lurks ;
Sister, your faith is very bad indeed,
'Tis sense religion, only fit for Turks ;
But if you do direct the house, take heed,
And fail not in your multifarious works
To cool your wines ; Horace they say you read,
And other Romans, if you do, at times,
You know that tepid vintages are crimson crimes."

XXVIII.

'Twas late, and low the vesper sunlight gleamed,
When Dian sought again the studio ;
Full dressed she came, her eyes enkindled beamed,
Her soft blush mirrored back the evening's glow,
Along her opal neck her dark locks streamed,
And radiant diamonds caught the flood below,
A glossy corsage laced her pliant side,
And into satin sheaves her rustling drapery plied.

XXIX.

No less equipped the other sisters came,
Whose glances splendor left their jewels none,
Their haughty grace made all adornment tame,
And in their gems they seemed to shine alone ;
So Heaven's own light eclipses every flame,
And leaves no illustration but its own ;
Still these warm natures loved their rich attire,
And all those fuel arts which served their innate fire.

XXX.

"My dear Diana, you are sweetly dressed,"
Said Carolina, "turn the other way."
"No," said Diana, "you I think look best,
You seem accoutred for an action." "Nay,
I trust your eyes, to spoil our Guardian's rest,
He is you know a little bit roué,
I am too young, and Anna is too cross,
To thee this enterprise, its profit and its loss."

XXXI.

"Be not so sure," said Anna, "if I cared,
You'd know for once how charming I can be,
And see me with such mignonne airs prepared
That Scipio's self had cast two looks at me ;
But this philosopher may go unsnared,
I yield him to the elder of the three ;
Let Dian have him, I shall never wince,
She's waited long enough, and he's an ancient prince."

XXXII.

"Alas ! your generosity I fear
Will bear no fruit," Diana said, "the guest,
The fated guest comes not ; he should be here,
'Tis long past six, that I should be so dressed
Yet lose my first, my only cavalier."
"Cheer up," said Carolina, "in the west
I do discern a knight come pricking through,
Though not so headlong as a hungry knight should do."

XXXIII.

"And then he rides, methinks, with youthful grace,
And seems to study while he rides, a flower ;
Surely 'tis not the venerable face
We had expected at this awful hour."
"It is a poet, may be, in your chase,"
Diana said, "he seeks his lady's bower."
"Lost poet then, so 'tis a tender one,
I'll eat it, lines and all, if you will have it done."

XXXIV.

The guest dismounted, passed the lattice door,
Through which the jasmines wafted as he went
And inward led, the ladies stood before ;
One instant stopping, courteously he bent,
Then would have spoken, but his lips forbore,
For Carolina's eyes met his, intent,
Whose flash upon his vision sprang and hung,
And doubly moved the heart, but paralyzed the tongue.

XXXV.

Emotions pass.—Our sweetest soonest go ;
The Guardian smiled, and with a brilliant air
Excused himself for being old and slow.
But Dian saw those sudden looks compare,
And though disdaining to confess a blow,
Her brow assembled all its lines of care ;
'Twas scarcely jealousy of love unknown,
Only a vague built thought, struck once and overthrown.

XXXVI.

Still Dian, like the rest of us, was forced
To hide her feeling, and disguise her fear ;
Meanwhile the facile conversation coursed
From grave to gay, from lively to severe,
The war, the opera, the wed, divorced,
The late great rains, the wretched crops, and—here
The major-domo glided in and said
In reverential tone—" The dinner, Miss, is spread."

XXXVII.

In perfect style, I scarcely need assert,
This unique dinner was set forth and laid,
Not the most bilious critic malapert,
Or pinguid epicure, could this upbraid,
Nor that condemn with praises too inert ;
Bounty and elegance at once displayed,
Combined at once the carnal and æsthetic,
And made the soul and senses mutually magnetic.

XXXVIII.

With silver, gold, and beaming crystal girt,
The table shone ; and when each blooming maid
Sat to the board, and spread her ample skirt,
The angels in their human masquerade,
No fairer lighted on our sphere of dirt,
When like the Pagan Gods to earth they strayed,
And shared urbanely in the country dinner,
Of some Deucalion, Lot, or other ancient sinner.

XXXIX.

I'd give the carte, but moderation stays,
Time presses now for more important things,
And I dismiss the dinner with a phrase,
Though often over soups and chicken wings
We act a scene remembered all our days ;
Sweet memories are like the grape vine's rings—
They cling to lightest frames, and bring forth fruits
So long as one last smile, one tear drop, feeds the roots.

XL.

The feast was o'er, and starlight now declared ;
Then all moved gaily to the garden stair,
Where, by night breezes delicately aired,
They quaffed their coffee redolent and rare ;
Around came perfumes by the flowers spared,
Which touched the least art sense, and yet were there,
Sent by each great and little leaf unfurled,
To swell in their small way the beauty of the world.

XLI.

This fragrance dense, and fit to be observed,
Induced the Guardian, in a jesting way,
To say that noses, organs highly nerved,
Were not regarded for what in them lay ;
They passed for fine as being straight, or curved,
Not for the fine perceptions they convey ;
Whereas, this smelling was an art emotion
Which might develop to a talent by devotion.

XLII.

"That may be jest," said Caroline, "but just—
A floweret's breath to me is ne'er so light
But it inspires emotion through my dust ;
Come, I'll arise and spread a little flight,
Now chrysalis of fancy rend thy crust,
Burst the cocoon of reticence my sprite,
And you two critics cripple not my wing ;
My unarmed butterfly cannot return a sting."

XLIII.

"Inhale the proud magnolia, and you feel
Romantic daring, vapor in the brain ;
Avoid the tuberoses, for it will unseal
A flood of love, of passion, and sweet pain ;
But the sad violet's breath how it can steal
Clear to the soul, and like a purest vein
Of heavenly influence refresh the heart,
Making good impulses, and stainless motives start."

XLIV.

"Those nestling plants which bosom on the earth,
Give mother perfumes lulling life's unrest ;
Those potent cups which spring from stems of girth
Pour out the wildness of their haughty crest ;
The lightsome bells that sway in breezy mirth,
Exhale their simple souls with simple zest,
So let us say that every flower that grows
Recites its poetry, albeit through the nose."

XLV.

"I treat you to this bit of eloquence,"
Said Carolina, "for our Guardian's sake,
His words, I think, are ample evidence
That my extravagance is no mistake ;
Indeed, it ought to sound like deepest sense
To cavaliers who ride but half awake,
And almost miss the magic dinner hour
Lost in the contemplation of a little flower."

XLVI.

The Guardian smiled : "you little know," said he,
"How great a beauty harbors in that plant,
Nay, how it swells the fortunes of you three ;
You have some acres on yon mountain slant,
Whence came the blossom, and where grows the tree,
And if my knowledge be not very scant,
'Tis that Cinchona whose specific bark,
Is weighed with royal gold and honored with its mark."

XLVII.

"Is that all ?" said Diana, "nay, I thought
The bud had rather been some graceful form,
With splendid color, and soft fibre wrought,
A thing to make imagination warm ;
But 'tis quinine ! with every bitter fraught,
And my bee fancies just about to swarm
And make poetic honey, dissipate ;
Alas ! dear Guardian, I am sorry you were late."

XLVIII.

"It was poetical thus far, he said
'Twas gold, and gold to poetry can turn,
'Twill buy the inside of a poet's head,
Almost the flame that makes his language burn ;
While poetry, until the poet's dead,
Brings hardly gold enough to gild an urn,
Much less to buy that cutlet day by day,
Which feeds the ethereal fire commingled in his clay."

XLIX.

"Too bad," Diana answered, "you must know
Your wisdom warms me with an awful fear,
My future is dismantled of its glow,
For I'm the bard and household poet here ;
But don't musicians famish, too, below ?
For Caroline is master in that sphere,
And 'twere a consolation to the scribe,
To know an equal fate impending o'er her tribe."

L.

"That they do so I almost know too well ;
But come, while music is the moment's word,
May I not ask you three to weave the spell :
Yon instruments plead mutely to be heard,
And you are artists." "That I never tell,"
Said Carolina, "we are sometimes stirred,
But our supply we never can predict,
At best 'tis not severe, and your demand is strict."

LI.

"Do not think so, play anything to me,
What piece is that upon the organ lying?"
"Ah! that is classic in a high degree,
Born of the nameless, 'tis of the undying,
For what more vital than a mystery?
We know no farther, after years of trying,
Than 'tis a manuscript, the verse and score,
And seems a fugue, or cannon of the largest bore."

LII.

"Call it an oratorio, a prayer,
Whatever serious name you like the best;
It needs four voices, but to find them, where?
Now if you read a bass we're truly blest,
Then we can have it in proportions fair,
We sing it, but so crippled and compressed,
Because, alas! to my despairing rage,
No heaven born basso deigns to drop upon our stage."

LIII.

"Such high descent I cannot claim," he said,
"But once, I do recall, I used to sing,
And this part too is easy to be read,
I'd like to try it more than anything."
"Enough," said Caroline, "on air I tread,
Come sisters rise, come voice, and key and string,
'Tis jubilate in my heart of hearts,
To play this lovely piece at last with all the parts."

LIV.

"Diana does the tenor : she's a girl
The most available this isle can show ;
From preaching, down to how to turn a curl,
There's naught worth knowing that she does not know ;
When once she shakes her talents out of furl
She sails on any wind that haps to blow ;
But join, begin, before my fingers freeze,
Attention girls and deep emotion if you please."

LV.

The keys she loved now Carolina smote,
The organ thrilled, then echoed far away,
Until the harp enlinked the escaping note,
And softly joying with persuasive play
Seemed to recall the truant strains in rote,
Enticing backward while they seemed to stray,
Till from the reeds at last, and quivering chords
They sprang in mass, like larks concerting heaven-wards.

LVI.

Delicious motives, varying gay and sad,
Presaging beauties, sallied now and then
Like early verdure ere the hills are clad,
Or vernal buds, which peep and close again ;
Still sparkled in the harp-chime bright and glad,
As when in some chance-lit embowered glen,
A brooklet glitters through the forest tone,
And breaks with rippling light the deep unsunny zone.

LVII.

Anna's soprano, rising on the strain,
Prolonged the theme the overture expressed ;
So the sad prophet pleading through his pain
Prayed for a people fallen and distressed ;
Such sighs imploring seemed to be not vain,
E'en were they to immortal ears addressed,
And thus at last a race of music's choice,
Might wake a slumbering God to listen to their voice.

LVIII.

Then her contralto Carolina poured,
And wide reproach her sombre accents flung ;
So, Sinai's mount, or Jordan's river ford,
Heard sternly melodized Adonais' tongue ;
Whoever listened followed where she soared,
And dreamed that nothing grand was left unsung ;
A heart of rock so smitten had been rent,
And buried springs of faith in all its depths unpent.

LIX.

The clinging tenor wove its notes between,
Where'er the mediating phrase could wind,
It seemed to seek the scattered chords, and glean,
And weave in sheaves their harmonies combined ;
When its sweet motive came to intervene,
Hope sprang anew, or sorrow grew resigned,
And constant through the score, below, above,
It urged the tender strains of sympathy and love.

LX.

The parts so merging or resurging went
Mingling their movements with expression rare,
Until the alto from its chords unbent,
And solved relenting on the sighing air ;
So, in sweet intervals of grave consent,
A god might yield him to a prophet's prayer,
While ever like the syncopated bass,
A distant people sobbed, complained, and plead for grace.

LXI.

Then in a tutti rushed an exultation,
Like hope and certainty and jubilee ;
And all the voices, raised to acclamation,
Pealed in one unison the melody ;
The singers, flushed with art's divine elation,
Imparted, all, with utterance loud and free,
Their fiery spirit to each ample phrase,
In jocund choruses, and noble hymns of praise.

LXII.

Vivace, presto, as the end drew nigh,
Their voices quickened, and their fingers flew,
Till, as some tangled oak which waved on high,
Now struck by woodmen, trembles while they hew,
Then bends subsiding from the azure sky,
And quick accelerating through the blue,
Whirls down its blending limbs until they crush,
Prone with a cadent shock which makes all nature hush,

LXIII.

So, from the highest measures where they sang,
Each voice and instrument descending swept,
And on the tonic simultaneous rang,
And stayed—the harps few lone, sweet chords except,
Whose dying chime with one far, fairy clang
Still touched the ear a moment and then slept—
As sleeps an echo when the thunders cease,
And leave the caverned hills to supernatural peace.

LXIV.

A stillness like the stillness of the past,
A vision that no genius could renew,
A ruined form that nothing could recast,
A flitting joy that nothing could pursue ;
The absence of a thing that could not last,
Yet seemed immortal while it lived and grew,
A void like that when Memnon spoke no more,
Or when "Great Pan is dead" resounded on the shore.

LXV.

Truly, it seemed that if that silence broke
A world of dearest memories would fall,
But through the half oblivion Anna spoke ;
And waking with a startled movement, all,
They seemed from dreams their beings to revoke,
And sadly, as if loosened from the thrall
Of some sweet, anodyne enchantment's strain,
Whose blessed gift made life one moment free from pain.

LXVI.

For all that music shed the slumbrous fire
That soothes, and melts, and unconsuming thrills ;
That warmed the rhythm of the marble choir,
Who dreamed and chanted on Olympian hills—
It knew no law but art's refined desire,
And sang the whole of passion but its ills ;
In short, 'twas that essential lyric flame,
At once too heavenly and too human for a name.

LXVII.

Said Anna, " what a large majestic grace,
Yet fine simplicity pervades this score,
No finished ornament is out of place,
And yet its unity would bear no more ;
But Guardian, take our interest in this case,
As Guardians must, this mystery explore,
You know composers, and you might guess him,
Is he alive on earth, or with the seraphim ? "

LXVIII.

" I knew him well, nay we were best of friends ;
If not the best, 'tis certain we had worse,
And oft, retired on cities skirts and ends,
Rich in our hopes, though even not in purse,
We've hailed that muse who champagne-ways descends,
And fabricated melody and verse,
Weaving old clouds of bright Bohemian mist,
Into new dramas which were uniformly hissed.

LXIX.

"This music then," said Anne, "derives from you."
"Mostly," he said, "'tis scarce worth being named."
But Carolina cried, "can that be true?"
And admiration all her look proclaimed :
Yet disinclined his praises to pursue,
Wishing to flatter, and still not be blamed,
Her theme she widened, and assured to please,
Began to speak of music in such words as these :

LXX.

"How so impassioned, yet divinely pure,
Is soul felt music ; 'tis the glorious art
Of all art's galaxy the cynosure ;
Its splendor radiates from the heaven-lit heart,
And kindles mind like truth made warmer, truer ;
From it all other inspirations dart,
It gives new motives to creative will,
And sends dynamic blood through every hidden rill.

LXXI.

How all the cries of grief, reproach, desire,
Fear, joy, content, sweet music can express ;
Painting and poetry may still inspire,
Still influence the soul, but less, far less ;
For music only has that tongue of fire
Whose language is all language in excess,
Whose tones are like material control,
Whose voice indeed descends from where the planets roll."

LXXII.

"Being so eloquent," Diana said,
 "You ought to let your hidden scores appear."
"Never," laughed Carolina, "till I'm dead,
 I'll never live till I am on my bier ;
You know an artist must be fully sped
 Before the world will cease to be severe.
But you are mocking, let our Guardian write,
While we enact the work his genius gives to light."

LXXIII.

"A splendid thought," said Anne, "to charm the hours,
 I'll paint the scenes if any new we need
With all my youthful, and maturer powers ;
 To cleanse our playroom were a pious deed,
For I looked lately through our trees and towers,
 And fled aghast, with undelaying speed,
Scared by the scowling of a million spiders,
Who seemed to rank me with unauthorized outsiders."

LXXIV.

"But," said the Guardian, "make a fair division—
 The score to Caroline, the piece to me."
"'Twould be," said Caroline, "the world's derision,
 If I should scribble while your pen was free."
"Nay, I maintain the music is your mission,
 My pen is wingless, practised though it be ;
But if your pride will stoop to my assistance,
I'll give you what I may, in cases of resistance."

LXXV.

"Ah! with that promise I am less in doubt,
And don the office with a better will,
I'll meet the future with an ally stout,
Sure of some honors from his borrowed skill;
But here is "Great Diana" quite left out,
If, Guardian, you and I propel the quill,
And Anna draws the costumes and the scenes,
Tell us where yonder easy genius intervenes."

LXXVI.

"Presiding demon, impresario,"
Diana said, "is just the post I like."
"Of course," said Carolina, "but you know,
You'll have to work at something or I strike."
"But I've no talent in the studio,
No gleam of genius not the most oblique."
"Indeed" said Anne, "behold the famous bird,
Who must be made to sing, or else will not be heard."

LXXVII.

"Nay, 'tis indeed my office—come concur,
And now to give my function exercise
I shall exert it first on you, dear sir;
Hear with obedience, as our love you prize,
I order you your going to defer,
We need you to encourage and advise;
Under your ægis we shall feel secure,
And in our mediocrity no longer poor."

LXXVIII.

"I ask no better fortune—I remain,
Glad to my impresario I bend,
Much of my past these very walls contain,
Much of my future may they comprehend ;
Then since my wits must be the first to strain,
This very night Parnassus I ascend,
How I'm received you'll know when morning shines,
With your permission then I'll read you my bad lines."

LXXIX.

"Good-night then Guardian, you must be alert,
For three small critics never known to spare."
"Good-night my wards, chastise me not to hurt,
Nor task me heavier than my strength can bear ;
I hope indeed my loins will prove well girt,
For though most critics give me little care,
I do fear you—so please to recollect
I'm now an amateur, and cry for some respect."

LXXX.

Now morning long had shone, the landward breeze
Came lightly from the main the lattice through,
And passing, brought fresh odors from the trees,
Which waved with fruit, and buds, and blossoms new.
In the clear distance rolled the silver seas,
With argent crests upon ethereal blue,
The earth was glittering with insect crowds,
The air with vocal birds, that winged against the clouds.

LXXXI.

Within, around a snow-white covered board,
The Guardian met his hostesses again ;
The greetings being passed, the frame restored,
They asked their laureate of his last night's vein.
He answered, that the muse had been adored,
But that his altar smoked like one of Cain ;
Ah no ! they cried, that morning style we know,
You're disenchanted now, but we will not be so.

LXXXII.

The Guardian then with a tired poet's sigh,
Drew forth his manuscript and read aloud ;
The maidens sat in expectation by,
A lovely audience still and earnest browed.
The piece was like what gallic wits supply
To draw their keen and comic loving crowd,
A light burlesque for classic dilettantes,
And called "The Fickle Greek or Jason in Atlantis."

LXXXIII.

The bard began, and reading grew inspired,
The muse descended brilliant as at first,
The faithful audience listened and admired,
And little notes of pleasure interspersed ;
So when 'twas finished nobody was tired,
But one and all in frank laudation burst,
What wit and force, and feeling it combines,
What purely ringing words and warmly welded lines.

LXXXIV.

"How," said the Guardian, "such good news for me?
This morning, I was quite inclined to think,
And am so yet—that in this comedy
There figures much less intellect than ink ;
But that's no matter, since the show is free,
And if I make the people yawn and wink,
More praise to this dear Maestro will accrue,
Who wakes the sleeping chords, and drowsy circles too."

LXXXV.

But Carolina made a piteous cry :
"Oh dear, I am unutterably lost,
You need a Maestro greater far than I—
I knew not what my promise was to cost,
E'en with your aid I cannot dare to try!"
"Alas!" he said, "is my wit touched with frost,
And can my lines no inspiration give?
Then say we kill the piece, and let the public live."

LXXXVI.

"Nay, nay," Diana said, "it shall be made,
I'll write the airs, and even paint the scenes
If Caroline and Anna are afraid,
Though I know not what Carolina means,
I never saw her make so much parade ;
We're not precisely princesses or queens,
But what we give, I venture to believe,
Will be quite good enough for any who receive"

LXXXVII.

Then Carolina quickly glanced and spoke :

“ Why be assured it was not that, I meant,
I feared not writing for the coming folk,
But lest the poet should not be content ;
Now I will blaze, if through a cloud of smoke,
And what I fancy, shame shall not prevent ;
So aid me chance, or my propitious star,
My hand shall drive the score through every bolt and bar.”

LXXXVIII.

“ Good luck !” said Anne, “ that’s settled then I trust,

For I shall daub no palaces and trees
If you indulge in spasms of disgust ;
What you begin you’ll finish if you please,
And promise too, else I prefer to rust.”

“ Well, I do promise, put yourself at ease,
The thing is done, a sure, accomplished fact,
I give myself a week, and piously contract.”

LXXXIX.

Seven morns thereafter Caroline appeared,

Bearing the music in a bulky roll :
“ Gracious !” said Anna, “ is the structure reared,
And is it that—oh, must we bear the whole ?”
“ Aye, that you must tormentor, by my beard,
But drown your sorrows in your coffee bowl,
Then after breakfast take it cool and calm,
And don’t anticipate a sermon or a psalm.”

XC.

When Carolina played the overture

They all applauded, and the Guardian said
"Well done, the form is living, free, and pure"—

"Why yes," said Anne, "it isn't very dead
Although the plagiarisms might be fewer,
Perhaps the melodies might have more thread—
But after all 'tis not a shocking thing :
Now for the vocal score, what part am I to sing?"

XCI.

Singing the parts, they found so much to praise,

So much to alter, that the sun declined,
And ere they ceased had spent his latest rays ;

Then Anna said,—“Come now, I'm almost blind,
This is not certainly the last of days,
On yonder clouds to-morrow sits reclined,
But him I claim, for I have work to show,
Though Caroline's success will make mine wane I know.”

XCII.

“Ah, ah ! Miss Critic,” Carolina cried,

“You fear me now that you have work to fault,
I shall go up to see you mortified,

And give you attic bees for attic salt ;
By rules of art your dragon shall be tried,

Upon my war-horse nimbly will I vault,
And run your scenes a most disastrous tilt,
Unless your windmills are remarkably well built.”

XCIII.

"Come all," said Anne "the shock will I await,
Firm as a rock, I never will recoil,
I drew my dragon from a Raphael's plate,
And covered him with scales of real tin-foil ;
My mountains are as good as they are great,
Yet, oh my dragon ! fruit of my best toil,
To him I cling, the landscape I'll resign,
But stand a lioness for that one cub of mine."

XCIV.

Up rose the day that Anna claimed for her,
'Twas like her talent, unoppressive light ;
Vivacious nature made an early stir,
And laid away the sombre robes of night ;
Cool as the clouds, that at the dawn concur,
The maidens came, all trimmed in floating white,
And sailed around till Anna took the helm,
And piloted the fleet to her peculiar realm.

XCV.

Full soon gay Carolina launching out,
Brought all the arrows of her wit to bear ;
She pierced the work with many a shrill winged doubt,
But hovering victory would not declare,
For Anna fought, and made defense so stout,
Citing the masters, quoting Lempriere,
That Carolina said, " I quit the field,
Dear girl, to two such dragons, Jason's self might yield."

XCVI.

"Well," said the Guardian, "'tis a man's good task,
To set a mise-en-scene as this is done,
I'd know not where to go, or whom to ask
To get a better or an equal one ;
Faith! there the Hesperian dragon seems to bask,
And here the apples glitter in the sun,
And well the light far o'er the mountains poured,
Is broken on their flanks with cliff and chasm scored."

XCVII.

"True," said Diana, "'tis her best design,
The points are all assembled into mass,
Yet plane from plane, from line to distant line,
The forms diffuse, and airy colors pass,
And, how the ocean spreads its azure fine,
'Twould almost answer the far spying glass,
So sea-disposed, that wheresoe'er we are,
Still its horizon lifts and bears the sight afar."

XCVIII.

"Triumph!" laughed Carolina, "live the brush,
You oily painters with your unctuous ways,
Launch on the tide of glory with a rush ;
But, I say, Anna, you deserve your praise,
Your lovely work makes criticism hush,
And even admiration seek a phrase ;
Whate'er the race, you're sure to be the winner,
Whereon, my lords and ladies, let us dress for dinner."

XCIX.

They dined that day beneath a mango shade
In utter nature as their hearts desired,
The major groaned, the cook was sore dismayed
Who thought a fiend the fancy had inspired,
The art of Vatel purely to degrade ;
But into that the guests not one inquired,
They carved the meats that came, the wine they poured,
Declaring both the best that ever sat on board.

C.

"Now friends," Diana said, "one thing we need,
Something marine, for I demand my spray,
Like cocoa trees, or, if you please, sea-weed ;
This house is too far inland and away,
Give me a sail, or I believe, indeed,
My wits will stagnate and my blood will stay."
"Order the boat," laughed Anne, "'twould be no joke
To have you taken with an apoplectic stroke."

CI.

The setting sun piled up one mighty sheaf
Of golden rays ; but soon the moon came fast
In crescent beauty, growing in relief ;
Her gleaming sickle through the sky she passed,
And harvesting the glory made her's chief :
Then throned on clouds, the queen of night at last,
Like a new queen, her court she new arrayed
In silver tissue light, and purple velvet shade.

CII.

Reclining on the cushioned seats, astern,
They saw in landward haze, sea, sky, and shore ;
Above, the steadfast stars began to burn,
And in the placid gulf, below the oar,
A world of fire was cleft at every turn :
And seaward now the whispering land breeze wore,
Waking faint ocean oracles that fell
Soft as the pearly voice, which thrills the murmuring shell.

CIII.

Now, on the echoing coast, the white clad slaves
Moved, scarcely seen, but known by that low song
They chanted to the chorus of the waves ;
The fisher's dog barked cheerfully and long,
The while his master drove the bamboo staves,
And spread his nets expanding light but strong ;
Then, stars of love, in every nook and keep,
Far guiding homelights rose and glimmered o'er the deep.

CIV.

" Oh night ! " Diana sighed, " Oh night to wake ;
Oh lovely night to take the lute and chant ;
Oh night to clasp all Heaven in one heart-break ;
Oh night to love a planet or a plant !
Come, Carolina, make these lute strings quake,
Sing of yon firmament of adamant,
Sing of the night—Oh, sing some heavenly strain—
About the happy stars, and worlds that have no pain ! "

SONG.

On yonder sheen what figures bright,
Of constellations rising,
Weave through the dark blue web of night,
Their tissues of celestial light,
And infinite devising.

Those heavenly images of fire,
Whose beauty grows with gazing,
Those are the worlds that we desire,
The spheres to which we still aspire,
Our tearful eyes upraising.

But even these like us may die,
And vanish ere the morrow,
While faith alone can see on high
New worlds, far, far beyond the sky,
Where there shall be no sorrow.

CV.

"Now that is wonderfully good," said Anne,
"Another verse had made it almost grand,
Whoe'er would know the true siderial plan
Is answered by my darling out of hand ;
Come down astronomer, thou groping man,
Here is the theory on which we stand.
Now, Dian, will you deign to strike the thongs,
And give us one of your sweet sentimental songs."

CVI.

"Mercy!" Diana cried, "if you can stop,
Where does your silly nonsense come from pray?"
"Out of my head of course, right here on top,
Where my bright thoughts, my champagne ideas stay,
My cork of nonsense sometime has to pop,
To carry Carolina's airs away;
But they are gone my lady like a star,
I'm melancholy now—assume the light guitar.

SONG.

Sir Rupert he rode with his men to the fight,
His lady, left weeping at home;
In silence she watched her fair lord out of sight,
Then turned with her eyes full of tears and of light,
And called for her maidens to come.

Go fetch me a doublet, and hosen and cloak,
And bring me the arms of a lad,
I cannot stay here from my lord and his folk,
I go to the fight, I may ward off a stroke,
Then die at his feet and be glad.

The enemy's banner streamed over the plain,
The baron was sorely oppressed,
He was smitten, and bleeding, and pale with his pain;
And when the sun sank, and he lay with the slain,
She lay with her head on his breast.

CVII.

"What a most ancient, and exhausted style!
I see," said Anna, "you are growing old,
Poor sister, when I think there was a while,
When you were not the wreck I now behold."
"Nay," said Diana, answering her smile,
"The more I venture then the more you scold."
"Yes, 'tis my gift—I lay it on the shelf
Like others, only when I need it for myself."

CVIII.

"But, Guardian, you look silvery in the moon,
Strike the resounding lyre to something gay,
'Tis now your turn to execute a tune,
Dian, I think, has fainted quite away,
Her efforts also nearly made me swoon ;
But clasp the harp—or no, I think I'll play,
Diana only sang one strain, the first,
I'll sing the second now, and you guess which is worst."

SONG.

She lay with her head on her warrior's breast,
His vassals were beaten, run off,
But she was not dead, and it must be confessed,
The chill of the evening congesting her chest,
She was slightly alarmed by a cough.

The victors had taken her castle and wine,
And wassail they held in the hall,
So she sobbed and she said "'tis the fiat divine,

My lord he is dead, but his fortune is mine,
I'd better go see to it all."

She buried him decently, deep in the ground,
And then, being nobody's wife,
She married the conqueror jolly and round,
And though for the baron her grief was profound,
Lived happy the rest of her life.

CIX.

Even Diana laughed at Anna's verse,
And praised her parody—"Were I," said she,
"Depraved enough to think there could be worse
Than my unconscionable poetry,
Yours is the gift my vision to disperse,
And make me see myself as others see."
"There, there!" cried Anna, "That is too severe,
Accept my truest hand, accept my kiss sincere."

CX.

"Ah, come!" said Carolina, "spare the scene,
Our Guardian cannot bear so much emotion,
Pass him the lute to sing to some Undine
A lay of sea love, infinite devotion—
A song of sighs to make the boat careen,
And dip the tear spray from the heaving ocean;
I feel a sadness stealing undefined,
I feel a formless cloud—some foe the fates unbind."

CXI.

"Then think no more of night and vanished stars,
Or heroes stretched upon the mortal field—
I'll change the theme and sing of gentler scars,
And of a nobler orb though now concealed ;
Love, and the Sun, are chanted in my bars,
That deep, true, love which like the dawn, revealed,
Grows dazzling like the Sun, and if it die,
Leaves memory in the heart like starlight in the sky."

SONG.

Ah ! quelle Aurore quand sur le coeur,
Le doux rayon d' Amour se lève,
L' instant béni de cette lueur,
Eveille enfin le vrai bonheur
Qui tantôt n'existait qu' en rêve.

La nuit astrée, vraiment est belle
Des lustres blanches qui parent son front,
Mais vite s'éteignent ces étincelles
Dedans les flots ardents, réels,
Que lance l' Etoile de l' Orient.

Ainsi l'on voit s'évanouir
Les pales images qui planent sur l'âme,
Quand dans le sphère de leur empire,
L' Amour céleste vient luire,
Et tout inonde de sa flamme.

Lors—si cette belle Etoile se baisse,
Si cet Amour une fois s'enfuit,
Toujours dans la tristesse il laisse
Des douces mémoires qui reparaissent
Comme les astres de la nuit.

CXII.

With sudden fury from the changing north,
There now swept by a chill increasing blast,
Back sank the moon, and shapeless clouds came forth—
The warm air curdled where the norther passed,
And in an instant, lambent swarth on swarth,
The storm scythe mowed the crested waves up cast ;
Darkness shut out the land—death in the foam
Gnashed on the breakers 'twixt the tossing boat and home.

CXIII.

Athwart the gathering gloom o'er head, around,
Flashing incessantly the lightening glowed—
Then, far and near, burst the wild thunder's sound,
And swept the rainlash, like a shrieking goad
Behind the blank maned ocean steeds unbound ;
The plunging boat o'er crest and chasm rode,
But still sustained the elemental wrath,
Speeding with buoyant life through ruin's chosen path.

CXIV.

Soon came on surging an impending wave,
Which wrapped in shrouding foam, too ghastly white,
Yawned o'er them like an omen of the grave ;
The sisters cried, "Can we outlive the night ?"
The Guardian answered, "Yes we can, be brave,
I swear it by the very lightning's light ;
Give me the helm ! I've made full many a vow,
And weathered worse than this, in lighter craft than now.

CXV.

The Guardian seized the helm, and shouted, "Men!
Bend to your oars once, pull and make them crack,
I'll bring her round to head the sea again—
Then hoist that jib—see that the sheets are slack—
Do more than all your duty, pull like ten!"
Round came the bow, down came the ocean black,
But the boat clove through that columnar tide,
And sank, and rose, and turned to breast the wave and ride.

CXVI.

Still blew the gale with more tempestuous force,
And rapidly the billows drove the bark
Where grating breakers called with voices hoarse,
And grinned in froth, that glistened through the dark;
The Guardian cried—"Oh men keep out your oars!"
And that they did, till every nerve was stark:
But they were nought, and nought their feeble strain,
'Gainst that condensing storm, and cumulating main.

CXVII.

Then apprehension first began to wake—
The Guardian's heart beat in his very throat,
Driving ashore—and what last effort make?
Anchors would hold not, nor the vessel float,
Yet these three more than precious lives at stake;
There was one hope, to safely beach the boat,
And so he hailed with shouts that rived the blast,
"Take in your oars, my men, and stand by for the last!"

CXVIII.

"We must drift on, so I shall go about,
And run ashore wherever I can reach ;
Now, when we strike, let every man leap out,
And lift the best he can to clear the beach ;
Your unrewarded faith I do not doubt,
But still I promise freedom, all and each,
If I can save these ladies by your aid."
And through the gale they clamored, "We are not afraid !"

CXIX.

He put the helm up and the shallop wore,
Quick as the wind she vaulted in the air,
She whirled about, and drove towards the shore,
With gathering speed thro' tempest, cloud, and glare ;
The gale rebellowed in the ocean's roar,
The thunder rolled the larum of despair,
The smitten water heaped electric foam,
And rays of horrent light edged every billow's comb.

CXX.

The Guardian stood, and with dilated eye
Scanned the dark coast in each revealing flash—
And once, he seemed a still lagoon to spy,
Somewhat protected from the breaker's crash ;
But o'er the reef the tortured spray flew high,
And where the gloom gaped with the lightning's gash,
It seemed to show the monstrous jaws of night
Spread but to clash again upon all hope and light.

CXXI.

Now with a lifeless cheek, but straining ear,
The Guardian listened for that dreadful noise,
Which all were bent with agony to hear,
The grating of the boat—a moment's poise,
Then in the gulf and down the billow sheer,
Embanked in seething snow she touched. "Out boys!"
The helmsman cried, then cast the rudder free
And springing fearless, first, leaped in the rolling sea.

CXXII.

A fearful moment—a terrific sight,
To see such brave men battle with such foe ;
The sisters sank in speechless mortal fright,
While those were swept in struggling, to and fro :
Vast changing waves of awful depth and height,
A formless but a ponderous ebb and flow,
Now dashed them gasping shoreward, whirled a-heap,
Now reft them scattered back, rewhelming in the deep.

CXXIII.

With more than human energy inspired,
The Guardian and his men, clung, pushed and braced—
He by his spirit, they, by his voice fired,
Bruised, blinded, drowning, still the danger faced ;
A giant palm, by gusty whirlwinds gyred
And struck by lightning, from the clouds displaced,
With all its weighty limbs fell headlong near
Unheard, unseen, uncared for, they were done with fear.

CXXIV.

But now a heaving volume of dark brine,
Shining and smooth as black obsidian
Up buoyed them far beyond the coral line,
And on, the vessel tremulously ran
Till caught in quiet water by a vine.
The crew climbed in unwounded, every man,
Alone, the Guardian's grasp relaxed its strain,
Sickness unstrung his nerves, and stupor numbed his brain.

CXXV.

"Oh girls, my arm is broken!" he exclaimed,
"Quick, Carolina, lean and help me rise!"
But she was useless whom the Guardian named,
Helpless herself, with fright and new surprise.
But Dian's arms embraced her hero maimed,
For though uncalled, yet tender, true, and wise,
Quick with the crew she sprang, the most alert,
To lift the wounded man through whom she lived unhurt.

CXXVI.

Half suffocated, almost bruised to death,
The Guardian fainted on her wave wet breast,
While fear and joy scarce left Diana breath,
To fill the bosom which his pale cheek pressed.
His moan of pain was love's own Shibboleth,
Straight to her heart the language was addressed,
And night and danger vanished while she dreamed,
This is my own to keep, my ocean pledge redeemed.

CXXVII.

"Set the boat over to the other side,"
At last she said, "our house cannot be far,
Let two of you run thither while we bide,
And bring us horses, or an easy car ;
First send for all the doctors far and wide,
And you who stay, light what dry sticks there are."
Soon, roused with cold, the aching patient stirred,
And his low shivering sigh at once Diana heard.

CXXVIII.

"We're safe ashore," she said, "escaped the storm,
The sky is breaking, and behold a fire,
Come dry your feet, and keep your poor arm warm,
And let us serve you, we are all entire."
Now the light flame evolved a flickering form,
And then became a bright, increasing spire,
Which mounted in the woods a radiant blaze,
Filling the copse with warmth, and penetrating rays.

CXXIX.

"Oh, oh, how comfortable!" cried they all,
"See how the value of a thing is known."
"Yes," said the Guardian, "after such a squall
A foot of terra-firma is a throne ;
This forest is a monarch's palace hall,
This reed the safest sceptre ever grown—
And I can fancy that the salt sea gems
Are crystallizing on your brows in diadems."

CXXX.

"Ah! you are bright with most unselfish grace,"

Diana said, "but I am unconsolated :

Here is my shawl, a bandage of fine lace,

'Tis rough dried, but 'twill save your arm from cold,

How can I see that suffering in your face

When I, to spare you pain, would bear untold?"

"Oh! 'tis not much," he said, "a man's right arm,

Is gloriously spent in shielding you from harm."

CXXXI.

"'Tis much," said Caroline, "a living debt,

Exactly something never to be paid,

This fearful night I never can forget,

In dreams for years I still shall be afraid."

"For me," said Anne, "I think I'm dreaming yet,

So wholly hopelessly was I dismayed—

Pah! drowning is the death I most detest,

Though I suppose there's none much better than the rest."

CXXXII.

"Faith!" said the Guardian, "all the world admits

That death's a waking of the rudest kind ;

There must be when the startled spirit flits,

An awful vista forward and behind,

And any choice among the infinites

Is but the wild selection of the blind :

But I feared not the sea, I know my lot,

My death has been foretold, and drowning it is not!"

CXXXIII.

“How, when, by whom?” “A sorcerer whom I knew,
A bearded seer once drew my horoscope,
He worked my starry houses through and through,
And damned my future better than a pope;
For certain of his visions did ensue—
And, kill-joy sage, assassin of all hope,
He prophesied, in some disastrous vein,
That I should die not late, and with a dagger slain.”

CXXXIV.

“Oh, horror!” cried Diana, “then stay here,
Stay here forever, I will take such care,
That this forecast shall fail for many a year,
No violence, not even in the air,
Shall enter past my vigilance of fear—”
“How fair a guardian angel—but beware,
Encase me not too strongly, for you know
A panoply of steel will draw the thunder’s blow.”

CXXXV.

Now, just as if by some good magic cleared,
The brindled clouds unveiled the heavenly lights,
The sky as splendid as before appeared,
And darkness left the empyreal heights;
The gale subsided, and the breezes veered,
Once more it was the loveliest of nights,
The lightning was extinct, the thunder mute,
And the last shattered billow broke irresolute.

CXXXVI.

"See now," said Anne, "the waves are so decreased,
We might go easily by water home."
"No, no!" cried Caroline, "enough's a feast,
Let's travel back on good substantial loam;
I've no intention when I am deceased,
To turn a mermaid with a glass and comb,
The boat is wrecked, don't dream of that again,
Besides here come the steeds—Adieu, unfriendly main."

CXXXVII.

Now near they saw the horses trampling through,
Crushing the sparkling tinder in the wood,
Panting and wet they sallied into view,
And staring fine eyed by the bivouac stood;
Foam from their lips at every movement flew,
And on their thorn-frayed sides, besprent with blood,
The shifting firelight jettied ruddier stains,
While ample shadows fell from their projecting veins.

CXXXVIII.

Joyous were all to see the cavalcade,
And straightway mounted, little willed to stay,
Then through the wood and new illumined glade,
The shadowy figures made their devious way;
Fair in the sky the stars were new arrayed
And fair on earth the quiet moonlight lay;
So on they passed and while they rode aside,
The fire threw one last gleam, then smoldered, smoked
and died.

CANTO II.



THE GUARDIAN.

CANTO II.

I.

A WIDE, high, spacious room with polished floor,
Cool and resounding, quite uncarpeted,
But laid with all the woods of nature's store,
In fabric over fine for foot to tread ;
On each long side expands a carven door,
And many latticed windows widely spread,
Whence, freely flowing round the painted walls,
The breezes are impelled and checkered sunlight falls.

II.

On every side, bright clustering pictures swarm,
And richly frescoed spreads the ceiling high ;
While here and there a vase, a marble form,
With cooler gleams relieves the dazzled eye ;
Where the deep colors glow intensely warm,
There dreams Endymion with his lover shy ;
Where the reflections congregate too bright,
There, lifts his marble bow, the snow-white god of light.

III.

At one end, from the ceiling to the ground,
A deep recess a store of books contains,
The works of authors brilliant or profound,
Each who the fancy, or the thought enchains ;
Here music and its instruments abound,
While over all the lordly organ reigns.
There, on a carved buffet, the next to hand,
Dry cakes and sugared fruits, with wine and ices stand.

IV.

Through the wide doors the eye can range abroad,
Where deathless plants perennial buds unroll,
Or where again, towards the ocean's bord
The ragged cocoas wave on every knoll ;
In front, a strip of sea-gleam, like a sword,
Hangs on the ribbed shore girt with coral shoal ;
Afar, the currents damascene its blue,
And near, its steely glancing cuts the picture through.

V.

Another side presents another scene,
Where large plantations of the sugar cane,
With lanceolated leaves of dull sea green,
And wax bright coffee grow on hill and plain ;
Yonder the mountains, in a rainbow screen,
Shine iridescent through the formless rain
Where all the vaporous breath that earth exhales,
Reeks on the heights again, and rills to feed the vales.

VI.

The far extending woods in massive tiers,
Wide zones of foliage round the mountains make ;
There, his thick crest the stark Corroso rears,
Or proudly salient through the meaner brake
The giant fig-tree bursts and domineers ;
Here, sombre and briarean by the lake,
The old mahogany, with vines enlaced,
Scowls on the forest by his mining roots displaced.

VII.

Endless varieties of lesser trees,
Adorn the scene with multiplying bloom,
So orange, green, and purple travesties,
Streak the pied tissues of a Gobelin loom ;
The mottled mountains fading by degrees,
Translucent azure far away assume,
Like that refined and dim marmoreal hue,
Blending on Reni's bosoms where the veins gleam blue.

VIII.

Within, the Guardian sits with face still pale,
But joyous on the sea his eyes are cast,
Two months have passed since that disastrous sail,
And now the broken arm is healed at last ;
New grateful pleasures through his frame prevail,
And all the pristine vigor of the past ;
The fair Diana stands assiduous near,
Seeking a theme to charm the convalescent's ear.

IX.



"What shall I read you, my dear Guardian, say ?
All the new books are read, and some re-read,
One must revert upon the past to-day,
On the immortal, and illustrious dead ;
Shall I read Milton now to make you gay ?"
"No," said the Guardian, "spare my feeble head,
I want to hear no half scanned Genesis,
With devils cannonading in the realms of bliss."

X.

"Well Shakespeare then ?" "No, him I know by heart,
At least his beauties, I abjure the rest,
The blushes of a Hottentot would start
At that Elizabethan filth and jest."
"Then Dante ?" "He's an old dry bone of art,
His juiceless quiddities I do detest,
A sadder pair of pedagogues, on oath
I never met, than Dante and his lady both."

XI.

"What will you have then, something older still,
Homer for instance ?" "I should go to sleep,
Those see-saw battles up and down a hill,
Those clockwork heroes make the moments creep,
Troy's mud baked walls assaulted with no skill,
And Father Priam equally are cheap."
"Well, Virgil, there's a lovely poet sure—"
"He has amusing traits, and tolerably pure,

XII.

"But good Eneas is an awful bore
And so Lavinia and Ascanius are."
Diana laughed : "Come, I will try once more,
Here is Confucius, China's dear papa,
His wit, you know, has made all ages roar."
"Confucius, never ! too much caviar."
"What, no ? Why master you are ill at ease,
How is our arm to-day, what makes you hard to please?"

XIII.

"Oh, I am well, I thank my lovely nurse,
Too well to care for books this beauteous day,
I much prefer to sit here and converse,
And wile the hours in hearing what you say."
"Good," said Diana, "may you ne'er do worse,
And I will tell you, talking by the way,
That all the world is in commotion yet,
To hear and criticise, our pending operette.

XIV.

For, in this time, the men have learned their roles,
And, with the indiscretion of true males,
Have sung them everywhere like wailing souls ;
I ordered them to rather sing their scales,
Or something kindred to their midnight bowls :
But no, the fatal mania still prevails.
Poor Carolina is aghast with fright,
And hides the overture from everybody's sight."

XV.

"Nay," said the Guardian, "there is no harm done,
It seems to show the trifle will succeed,
Get the rehearsals then at once begun,
And bring the crisis with the greater speed.
Why not commence it with to-morrow's sun?
You, madam impresario, take the lead,
And write to Atlas, and my Grecian crew,
That we rehearse to-morrow, punctual at two."

XVI.

"I will," said Dian—"Then another thing,
I want your amiable advice about,
A fancy passed me like a bird on wing
And faded somewhere in the realms of doubt—
'Twas this, that when the world has heard us sing,
We finish with a masquerade and rout!"
"Good," said the Guardian, "we can do no less,
If that wont, nothing will ensure complete success."

XVII.

Next day at two, the whole commingled troupe
Responded fully to Diana's call,
And clustering in an animated group,
Talked of the piece, the music and the ball;
Firstly they ate a lunch of parrot soup,
With good canary in the dining hall,
Then to the theatre they moved apace,
Diana leading forth with all inviting grace.

XVIII.

Here orchestra and actors gathered fast,
Tuning and screaming "Say, have you the A?"
Or, "Where's the chorus?"—"What a stupid cast!"
"For my part I can never sing to-day."
"Bon jour." "Oh mercy! there you are at last."
"Is this the bass?" "Well, what am I to play?"
"Come here." "Go there." "Stop, tie my sandal please?"
"I have a frightful cold, forgive me if I sneeze."

XIX.

"Gracious!" cried Anna, "here's a dreadful scene,
Was any object ever known to fit?
Don't put those lights so near my magazine,
You'll blow us up. Oh! you're the soul of wit."
"Come," cried the Guardian, "where the deuce—I mean,
Please to excuse me, move that shore a bit.
Now Carolina, are you going to lead,
We wait for you alone, we're ready to proceed?"

XX.

The fair composer seized an ebon wand,
And waved it high, with joy in every trait,
Bang went the music of the fortress band—
"Trombone," cried Carolina, "you're too late;
You drummer, what's the matter? Spare your hand!
Look second flute the movement is twelve eight;
'Cello, observe that C is double sharp,
And harper, if you please, stop tuning up your harp."

XXI.

"Piano, softly, will you deign to mind ?
Now hautboy take the trill, don't be afraid ;
You horns, we're waiting till you feel inclined,
A fine diminuendo you have played,
I call that forte, tell me are you blind ?
That second fiddle, he was born, not made.
Crescendo, come, wake orchestra perverse,
Apollo help us—after all it might be worse."

XXII.

So went the overture ; and then the piece,
Chaos, the Guardian thought had come again.
"We'll never make them think we came from Greece,
Where dramas figured on the open plain."
"Oh, some rehearsals under good police,"
Diana said, "will bring us into train,
And since this is no moment to excel,
For my part I'm astonished that we do so well."

XXIII.

Then Anna's palace would not stand erect,
And all the carpenters received their share.
"Indeed," said Anna, "what can you expect,
When such stupidity pervades the air ?
You, Mr. Jones, are you an architect ?
Come reeve those pulleys, some attention there,
Do you suppose that you deserve per day
The guinea that you earn in this disgusting way ?"

XXIV.

The second act commenced with more success,
And went sometime without the least mishap.
"That moves," the Guardian said, "I do confess,
Now I have hope, but where's the thunder clap?
Our battery lacks a natural address—
Tympani! give us one electric rap—
But not too shocking—ah! that pagan gong,
Sourdine the drums, be merciful as you are strong."

XXV.

When came the final scene and great event,
The carpenters ran wild from side to side ;
Long on the ropes their furrowed brows were bent,
This must be loosed, that other must be tied ;
And oh! What may be that distressing rent ?
Is that for lightning? Well, its far too wide!
Such were the troubles, but at last they ended,
And then the words were, excellent, sublime and splendid.

XXVI.

Like this, flew many lively going days,
And friends at these rehearsals, now allowed,
Performed their parts of light advice and praise,
But chiefly to the charming lunches bowed,
Where fruits, and breads, and wines, and game patés
And mountain ice from peaks above the cloud,
Slaked thirst, fed hunger, or the wit restored,
With all the tonics of an ample, graceful board.

XXVII.

This style was called so perfectly divine,
That Anne proposed to add a rural fete ;
So that, was grafted on the first design,
And then the notes began to circulate ;
At once the belles prepared to rise and shine,
At once the beaux, the belles to imitate.
Forth came a shower of costumes bright or sere,
As when your woods in fall salute your changing year.

XXVIII.

All was concerted by the promised day—
Up rose the sun, and sunward rose the dew ;
The hours passed on, and now each centering way
Was thronged with carriages to farthest view ;
And cavaliers, with more or less display—
Some ambling wisely, others prancing through,
Threaded the groups or dashed across the plain,
Until at Dian's house they drew the loosened rein.

XXIX.

Well ! such a crowd this island never saw,
In fact the island was one glittering guest,
Each name was welcome, and each will was law ;
Each pleased himself, and every one the rest.
Each flattering phrase its kindred served to draw,
Each wit was brightest, and each costume best ;
And now dispersed, or wandering side by side,
All sought the various joys that Dian's wealth supplied.

XXX.

The parks were ordered with so kindly taste,
That every view was novel to enjoy :
Dry mossy benches here and there were placed,
Where the clipped vine revealed the clusters coy,
Or endless roses made a beauteous waste,
In sweet retreats to tempt that lovely boy,
Who, though so blind, has seen enough to know
What perfumed gardens are, to furnish for his bow.

XXXI.

On the blue water were canoes to skim,
And deeper sail boats through the wave to glide :
Some cruised in mirth and glanced from brim to brim,
With dripping oars or canvas wings unplied ;
Some shooting 'neath a blossom laden limb,
Under its fragrant balcony would ride,
While on the shore the boaters joined the dance,
Or quaffed from ice filled cups the foaming wine of France.

XXXII.

Guitars were strung and hung up everywhere,
For almost all possessed a skillful hand,
To touch the cords for some sweet singing fair ;
And while one carolled, passing groups would stand
To listen gaily and applaud the air,
Or join their voices at her eyes command,
Till frolic spirit made the chorus wild,
And laughter closed the song, and other sports beguiled.

XXXIII.

Swings, bowling alleys, billiards, cards, and chess,
And stands for archery and guns were near ;
The tents and groves were crowded to excess,
With all amusements to the idle dear.
The day was vowed to utter carelessness,
And could one day have banished hope and fear,
And all the brood which makes care never done,
Such, would have been the day, and this, the very one.

XXXIV.

'Twas afternoon, and o'er the water gliding
There gleamed afar a silver shelled canoe,
And one bright maid the little vessel guiding,
Seemed with the breeze her fancy to pursue :
Near, on the shore, the Guardian lone abiding,
Gazed while the sprite-like vessel closer drew,
Till at his feet the embarkation stranded,
And smiling Caroline, upon the margin landed.

XXXV.

"You sail right boldly, you who fear the sea,
I never dreamed to find you on the water."
"I'm only brave on little floods," said she,
"Naiad I am, but not great Neptune's daughter ;
There is no soul of granite built in me,
Only the ordinary brick and mortar,
My taste is for the graceful and serene,
On lake and not on ocean is my role and scene."

XXXVI.

Sweet, splendid, tropic flowers, and graceful palm,
All beauteous ether, and bright rippling lake,
Delicious breezes freighted with a balm
As 'twere the breath of nature half awake ;
A silence here, a solitude, a calm,
While far, the sounds of mirth and music break—
Such was the scene when Carolina spoke,
And from her lover's lips the heart impulsive broke.

XXXVII.

"Wheree'er you are, whate'er you do," he cried,
"You're always beautiful like nature's own ;
Your genius shines whenever it is tried,
And yet your heart would triumph over none ;
He who has lived one short hour by your side,
In truth will never after live alone,
For that one hour in memory's dearest place,
Shall fix a dwelling form that nothing can efface.

XXXVIII.

"Recall not all my blindness of the past,
Tell not the years of my abhorred neglect,
You were an infant when I saw you last,
Though now with every charm of woman decked ;
How time has flown ! for me perhaps too fast,
But do not on that misery reflect,
Still let me hope, and let the voice of truth,
Lend me, if that need be, some influence of youth.

XXXIX.

" I love you deeply, first and last ideal ;
I love you freshly, first and last of passion ;
You are the fairy shape at last made real,
Which all my early fancy used to fashion,
And unto which my later years are feal :
Then lift those eyes, still let them softly flash on,
Open those lips whose breathing is my life,
Accept my love and say, yes, I will be your wife."

XL.

" To be your wife, yes, yes, my heart would speak,
And I, speak with it, yield with every voice ;
But praise me little, you have seen me weak—
Though, could my qualities confirm your choice,
Your praise were all I could desire or seek,
Your conquest all in which I would rejoice ;
But tell me one thing first, and tell me true,
Do you not know perchance, that Dian loves you too?"

XLI.

" Diana loves me not, nor do I her,
At least sweet Caroline, this way, I mean ;
Oh don't imagine, or for grace defer,
Whatever fears between us intervene ;
Invent no check, your sisters will concur,
I have no thought from you or them to screen ;
Moreover, they have hundreds who adore,
So be thou mine alone, and leave them hundreds more."

XLII.

“ Well, I believe—I hope—that this is true,
I thought—but never mind, the thought is gone,
I love you, for no man can rival you,
And what I say will never be forsworn ;
Yet oh this day, may fate ne’er make me rue,
For still I fear and still my heart is torn—
But here’s my hand, beloved, and here am I,
Thine, from this moment, both, with true fidelity.”

XLIII.

“ Ah! sweet consent that dissipates my fear,
And heralds you mine own before the world,
Come soon the time when all the world can hear,
Though now your sail must be again unfurled,
And we must part till this wild folk is clear ;
Adieu! thou star within mine orbit whirled ;
Yet not adieu, for still I follow you,
And where my steps are held, my loving thoughts pursue.”

XLIV.

Now the ripe sun hung in the garden west,
And eve advanced on lengthened shadows treading.
The Guardian, tired of tumult, sought for rest,
And houseward through an orange grove was threading
When Dian met him. “ Stay, thou greatest guest,
Is this not finer than Camacho’s wedding ?
Where goest thou then, thou animating spark,
When yonder other sun abandons our dull park ? ”

XLV.

"Hail ! Dian full of grace," he answered straight,
Are you not Dian with a softer light ?
I were no sun if I should set too late,
And you, my lady, ought to rule the night."
"Let sun and moon be emblems of our state,"
She said, "and gather stars on left and right,
Yet I shine not if I must shine alone,
I have no light, except reflected from your own."

XLVI.

"I go to see the theater," he urged.
Diana answered, " Well, I come from there,
'Tis all in order master, swept and purged,
The scenes and costumes do but wait for wear,
The orchestra has been policed and scourged,
And coming conquest seems to scent the air ;
Therefore, a moment, be at rest and free,
You must be tired enough, if you resemble me."

XLVII.

"Yes, what a day ! Time seemed an able foe."
"Had you no other foe perchance than time ?"
"What other could there be, or could I know ?"
"Well, some fair maid, or woman in her prime,
Bearing the shafts that lay the strongest low."
"Ah ! that's a fear that reaches the sublime,
But on the score of love, what shall I say ?
E'en he, I fancy, cannot conquer in a day."

XLVIII.

"You know not, there must come a day, an hour,
When culminates the growing of the past :
Then the unnoticed germ bursts out a flower,
And that thin form on which no look was cast
Now fills the way with grace and odorous power ;
So love, long springing, may expand so fast,
That in one day 'tis suddenly confessed,
Too soon, too late, perhaps, but not to be repressed.

XLIX.

"Nothing is finer than your skill Diana,
You are the poet whom we must admire."
"Nay, say not that, for I am no phrase planner,
Nor can I make perfidious terms conspire ;
I marshal all indeed beneath truth's banner,
And sometimes publish more than I desire ;
So do not think my talk of love is light,
Nor think the word involves a rhymer's futile flight."

L.

"True," said the Guardian, "'tis a holy word,
A revelation when 'tis deeply felt—
A voice divine, the first time it is heard,
To which all kneel, or shall, or must have knelt ;
Whereon I've wondered how you live unstirred,
And wherefore, deep beneath your jeweled belt,
The magic heat has never yet been known
Changing that temperate cestus to a torrid zone.

LI.

“Stop jesting!” cried Diana, “ask no more,
 Or ask not if I have, but do now, feel—
 That magic heat is one deep burning sore,
 Of my disease the stigma and the seal,
 Unless, indeed, my wound be balm laid o’er
 With love returned, whose only balm can heal.
 I never knew you mock, if you speak so,
 You must be trebly blind, or else a heart of snow.”

LII.

“Forgive me, for I merit not that style,
 This day has been divorced from graceful thought,
 For I have spent it on our friends the while,
 And got their dullness in my habit caught ;
 I started with my fancy like the Nile,
 But now you see ’tis something overwrought,
 ’Twas too much Egypt for that poor Undine,
 Though you appear as fresh as Egypt’s tireless queen.”

LIII.

“If we are then to be compared to those
 And I pursue your simile to end,
 I’ll say that when my river overflows,
 I like to have the flood on me transcend ;
 May not my gardens boast a vine or rose,
 Which you might wish to foster or defend,
 And one wild plant that springs, must I conceal,
 Because you see it not, or scorn its mute appeal?”

LIV.

“ Be Egypt, focus of a rich effusion,
But don't Diana, be the Sphynx beside,
I hear you truly, but to no conclusion,
You speak in riddles somewhat misapplied ;
I've lived enough to hate the least illusion,
Therefore say plainly, or your words fly wide,
What must I foster or defend ?—Speak out !
Trust to my well known love, nor dread a phantom doubt.”

LV.

“ His well known love ! then evening shade my blush,
How warm his words are, what a kind reply ;
Why, friendship ! would disdain that tepid gush ;
Your well known love ? Then what is mine ?—am I ?
When shame and anger through my being rush,
And yet I utter this imploring cry.
Look at that moon, I bear her worthy name,
But while she rises there, she reddens at my shame.

LVI.

“ But I am born beneath a zenith sun,
I scorn my name, I hate the very sound ;
Yet no ! forgive me, look not so undone,
Can I believe that you have really frowned
To hear Diana say that she is won ?
Or, do you think that virtue is discrowned,
Because a woman's heart her fear ignores,
And speaks its impulse to the being she adores ? ”

LVII.

It is no shame, if even I'm repelled,
Though if you hate me I have but to die ;
Once more, I love you ! naught is now withheld,
And yet once more I dare to meet your eye :
O ! whence that gloom upon your features felled,
Or do the gathering shades of night there lie ;
Speak ! speak ! and quick, or at your feet a grave
Will open for Diana—

LVIII.

“ Up ! up ! Diana,” cried the Guardian pale,
“ Accuse no fault, accuse yours least of all,
I love you dearly, and let that avail.
What ! at my feet, oh rather let me fall ;
But rise, assert your pride too true to fail,
And hear the voices that forever call,
Whose names are love, and art, and all that's free :
Open your fainting eyes, live for your sisters—me.”

LIX.

“ Ah ! ” sighed Diana clinging to his hand,
“ You bid me live, oh, be forever blessed,
Where are the accents that I would command,
To tell you how you put my heart to rest !
I should have died with anguish where I stand
Had my wild words recoiled upon my breast ;
But speak again, and once more let me hear
Tell me you do forgive, you love, you are sincere.”

LX.

"Of course I do, but see, they light the trees,
They wait for us, they call you to your throne ;
I hear the music floating on the breeze,
Which we must answer since it is our own ;
The moments fly, but others follow these,
And in the ball-room we can be alone ;
I've much to tell you, much of love and care,
And I will meet you then, what colors do you wear ?"

LXI.

"I know not, dearest, ask Alma the nurse,
But I shall know you, never fear my sight,
Though you were trebly masked and my sight worse,
I'd know you by your gesture, step and height ;
But fail not, for your absence were a curse,
Deeper than blindness on a life of light."
"Oh you will see me, wherefore should I fail,
But now think all on art, and make our piece prevail."

LXII.

The moon-lit night advanced : on every side
The lanterns flashed, and at their signal flame,
The splendid theater was opened wide ;
Thence flowing, light and melody out came,
Enhancing the romance of even-tide,
And thither cavalier, and maid, and dame,
In bright costumes and smiling, all on all,
With gay confusion pressed, and filled the glittering hall.

LXIII.

Meanwhile Diana, dressing for her part,
Called for her sister Anna full attired,
And said, "My sister let me claim your art,
These cheeks are pale, and need to be more fired ;
Your pencil is the image of love's dart,
Touch me with rouge, just as you feel inspired,
I have a conquest, not so much to make,
As to secure this night, almost for honor's sake."

LXIV.

"What conquest?" Anna said, with half-toned scorn,
"I see no deer here, worthy of your shaft."
"Oh, yes!" said Dian, one of ten tined horn,
And worthy of the noblest hunters craft."
"But honor! truly, are your senses gone?"
"Well sharpest, dearest, do not think me daft,
It is our Guardian, better can I name?
I love him, he loves me, can you dissuade or blame?"

LXV.

"Not I, Diana, I am glad 'tis so,
You know you owned him at his first appearing,
He is a brilliant if an ancient beau,
But then your foliage is a little searing,
So you're a match as good as matches go,
And if your beauty needs this light veneering,
Why his"—"Come Miss Irreverence be still,
The blush is here itself, and scoffs your pencil's skill."

LXVI.

Then Anna, laughing, flew behind the scenes,
But Carolina called her as she went :
“ Stay artist, tell us what this hurry means,
And whither mischiefward your steps are bent,
Or, what young maiden entering her teens,
This is I see, so light, and so content ?
But stop, I need you, need your hand and taste,
I must be rouged to-night, so come and see it placed.”

LXVII.

“ By Iris !” Anne exclaimed, “ I am in vein
I’ve just released Diana from my claw,
But you—well never may I paint again,
Who plastered all this carmine on your jaw ?
A napkin, quick ! to make that color wane,
For you’re the fieriest fright I ever saw,
Almai is mad, if that can be her style,
Or is it you, my dear, whose talent is so vile ?”

LXVIII.

“ I tried an unaccustomed art to please,
I have a lover on the scene to-night,
And, to enhance my beauty some degrees,
I’ve made me what you deign to call a fright.”
“ Seigneur !” cried Anna, “ lovers grow on trees,
And pray what fruit are you inspired to bite—
Who is your lover ? Cupid I shall burst,
Our name is going fast, well let me know the worst ?”

LXIX.

"The man I love is one you know as well."

"Oh yes, I know them all, and would know less."

"But he's not common, guess, or shall I tell?"

"If he's uncommon I shall never guess."

"Oh yes, guess fifty times, but there's the bell,

And I must go, but I will first confess—

It is our Guardian—save me! how you stare,

Is that so strange? can you—well talk to me elsewhere."

LXX.

One flash of lace, and lawn, and satin gemmed,

And Caroline was gone, but Anne remained;

Now her first flow of joyous thought was stemmed,

And weighty doubt her lively step restrained.

And now she feared, and now her fear condemned,

Now all confused, now every thing explained;

Diana's, Carolina's lover—one?

And he!—what deep mistake, or else what mischief done.

LXXI.

If this is treachery, at last thought Anne,

To-night shall be the limit of its scheming.

So she advised a counteracting plan,

Whose end was closer, wilder than her dreaming.

But what has reason ever done, or can,

When passion heats, and errors grow to teeming?

It shuns one danger, but a new creates,

Or seems to check the fate it still accelerates.

LXXII.

Thus on the impulse Anna called Almai :

“ Almai,” she said, “ You know that at our ball,
My sisters wear blue dominoes, and I,
Only our roses tell us each from all.
Now, for a timely jest I mind to try,
A joyous hour, amusing to recall,
I wish their roses changed. Do this unknown,
And here is gold, be ever silent 'tis your own.”

LXXIII.

In this way, Anna thought, there must ensue,
A prompt solution of one kind or other.
If that strange man be heartless or untrue,
He shall not harm a daughter of my mother ;
If not, they'll learn what it is time they knew,
That one at least must her illusion smother.
Ah ! here is sport indeed, and am I right—
Or wrong—shall I preserve, or wreck a heart to-night ?

LXXIV.

Half turning, Anna showed so pale a cheek,
That Almai said “ Have you not on a mask ?
Nay, then this jesting is no common freak,
And I do fear to venture what you ask.
Why give me gold ? Why must I never speak ?
To change the roses is an easy task,
But Dian to offend, not e'en for you,
Although—nay this is something that I should not do.”

LXXV.

“ Are you so keen? Well then away with fiction,
 My face is evidence I'll not contest,
 I'll give you truth, but give me your conviction,
 Then do precisely what you think the best ;
 I am, indeed, in such a real affliction,
 That my design by no means is a jest.
 It may all jests, all joys annihilate,
 Our Guardian is the cause—yes, be surprised, but wait.

LXXVI.

“ My sisters are enamored both of him,
 I know not why, but that, I've heard them say ;
 I know not either how his wishes trim,
 Nor how his heart turns ; be that as it may,
 This is not, as you see, a vulgar whim,
 Ah, would it were so little if so gay,
 For life, for honor, I must change the roses,
 And truth to-night unfold, from what the lie discloses.

LXXVII.

“ For he's been told, or will be told by both,
 What robes they wear, and so he will respond ;
 Each will receive the other's lover's oath,
 Or learn indeed that one has been too fond.
 In either case 'twill check this danger's growth,
 Which must be done, no matter what beyond.
 Now you possess my secret ; are you mine,
 Or rather ours, in heart, to further this design ? ”

LXXVIII.

"Yes!" cried Almai, with vehement expression,
"I'll change the roses, and do more if need ;
Diana loves—and who contests possession ? "
Then to herself—" Ha, Caroline indeed !
But later, louder, for the great confession,
Which ruins her and leaves Diana freed.
Well go Miss Anne, just now the band began,
Trust me, my heart is in it, I'll ensure your plan."

LXXIX.

"Yes," hissed the negress with a deepening scowl,
"This mingled slave at last must have her fall,
What blood is hers, if even mine is foul ?
Ah, you step proudly while my offspring crawl !
You dance and sing, while we must creep and howl !
I spared you for Diana, and that's all,
But now you dare to eye her equal love ?
Then take your slavish place, and let them shine above."

LXXX.

Now Carolina raised her baton high,
And now the awaited overture began, '
The torch of art that lightened from her eye,
The brand of genius, kindled every man.
She made one thrill in every bosom fly,
And through the orchestra the torrent ran ;
She stood before them, self-possessed and brave,
And urged dramatic fire with each impelling wave.

LXXXI.

If Carolina's instinct e'er were blind,
Its aim was noble, and its effort blessed,
Her teeming heart informed her willing mind,
And beauties grew wherever she transgressed.
The orchestra her every wish divined,
And toned and colored at her lightest gest,
While each progressive phrase enlarged the song,
And influence of success impressed the listening throng.

LXXXII.

At last, with one exultant burst of sound,
The rapid music culminating rose
And filled the roof, and shook the walls around,
Then ceased, and silence was its stunning close—
But soon the clamor came of tongues unbound,
Nature was moved among the belles and beaux,
And forced from all, without restraint or pause,
Round upon round of wild, spontaneous applause.

LXXXIII.

Electrified by this, the actors stirred,
And every nerve was stretched to passion's key,
The very least who had to say a word,
Found movement and emotion newly free ;
But, on Diana soon all eyes concurred,
And voice and breath were held to hear and see,
While franchising her deep impetuous soul,
She breathed the tones of life and motive through her role.

LXXXIV.

Infatuated by the scene, the light,
 The music, and her idolizing love,
 Her form was filled with spiritual might,
 Her glances seemed to drain the stars above ;
 Her color scorned the enamel's red and white,
 While love and doubt upon her visage strove ;
 She improvised new words in every phrase,
 And burned their meaning in, with that deep sibyl gaze.

LXXXV.

Her dazzling eyes, her alabaster skin,
 With floods auroral seemed to radiate.
 The fiery elements that coursed within,
 Were life, and genius with that life innate,
 Which now sprang forth no transient praise to win,
 But all their thirst of utterance to sate :
 Her nature grasped its own imperious need,
 Reckless of any judge, and lost to every heed.

LXXXVI.

On one sustained, and overwhelming stream
 Of unpremeditated eloquence,
 Her being launched to liberty supreme,
 And gave her art tumultuous evidence :
 Rapt with the fascination of her theme
 And furious joy of lyric excellence,
 She whirled her pulse through every heaving breast
 And made her triumph live a memory's bequest.

LXXXVII.

If, in the night we eye the glorious field,
Flooded with moonlight and the starry spray,
The many splendors that we see revealed,
Shine with a fair, but not a earthly ray ;
Pure admiration unto them we yield,
Nor power to stir a deeper chord have they :
All are too thin, unreal, and too far,
To seem attached to us, or parts of what we are.

LXXXVIII.

But now, ignited by terrestrial air,
A blazing meteor traverses its arc—
That, checks the breath—provokes the sudden stare—
At once the less effulgent lights are dark,
And we are fixed by its bewildering glare.
Such, comes to us a messenger of mark,
A heavenly fragment plunging in our sphere,
Seeming to make our home and all the worlds more near.

LXXXIX

So, like a meteor on a sky star dense,
Diana shone eclipsing all the rest ;
Deep with her heart's reality intense,
Wild with the fever of life unrepent,
Undimmed in fire, and strong without suspense,
She filled the piece with unimagined zest,
And gained ovations from the first to last,
Till acclamation rose to one tempestuous blast.

XC.

When all was finished and the curtain fell,
The orchestra commenced a dancing measure ;
The guests arose at that well known appel,
Masking their faces in the moment's leisure.
Then, undistinguished, dame and demoiselle,
And squire and sir, made mystery their pleasure :
The dance was formed, and midnight mirth let slip,
While keen or joyous jesting flew from lip to lip.

XCI.

"Black mask," exclaimed an Angel to a Demon,
"By my false wings, I'm glad to see you here."
"And by my horns sweet angel, for you seem one,
My own delight is no whit less sincere.
But wake me gently, or else let me dream on,
For that blest opera still haunts mine ear.
Tell me, what think you of this earthly fiddling ?
Some passion, ha ! it makes an 'In Excelsis' middling."

XCII.

"Retro Sathanas, bad taste, bad enquiry ;
Still, if you want an amateur opinion,
I thought it had an air of being wiry,
Its school was certainly the Abyssinian.
Some of the fiddling was a sparkle fiery,
But all of it was Anti-Paganinian :
In short, my nerves have slowly been dissected,
Though on the whole, 'twas quite as good as I expected."

XCIII.

Then came two dominoes. Said Grey to Brown,
 " Not bad, that cool performance of Diana."
"Most excellent, my faith, it brought me down,
 It had a dash of more reality than manner."
" Yes, that indeed, to make the virtues frown,
 'Twas not in fact the style of a Susannah,
But she is handsome, though a trifle yellow,
And he's an odd fish, but a very lucky fellow."

XCIV.

Fair Roman Tullia met a French Hussar,
 And seemed to start with admiration bland.
"Venus!" she cried, " How beautiful you are,
 A waist like that no classic ever spanned ;
I wish you'd show yourself to dear papa,
 And ask the honor of his daughter's hand :
However, no, you cannot bear contracting,
But tell me lively youth, what thought you of the acting?"

XCV.

" I thank you madam, I am scarcely fit
 To court your father, or your father's heiress :
Heiress indeed, of anything but wit,
 For I can tell you that the dames of Paris,
Talk better than a thrice wed Roman chit—
 And waists ! why that, would frighten all the fairies,
I never hope to figure at your toilette :
As for the acting, there was nothing left to spoil it."

XCVI.

A swart Crusader stumbled on a Friar,
 " What, drunk my son ? you bear a heavy cross."
" Not of that crime accuse me holy sire,
 The weight I bear, I ne'er should feel its loss."
" Nay son, confess—we shrive not the denier."
 " Bah ! these light wines urge not one flagon toss ;
I never knew a dryer feast or sparer,
Shrive me indeed, then shrive a camel in Sahara."

XCVII.

" Well, well, my son, fast, mortify the flesh :
 I looked in vain for sorrel soup this day,
The lentils I obtained were not too fresh,
 And I have hardly wet my mortal clay ;
But each indulgence is a new knit mesh,
 Temptation's net involves our every way.
The feast was poor, nay, devilish poor I think,
But there is more to come, and haply heavier drink."

XCVIII.

Meanwhile, behind the stage, the sisters flew,
 Glowing with joy, triumphant with success,
Where'er they turned they met with praises new,
 And where they stayed the flatterers came to press.
" What skillful acting, and the scenes how true,
 How fine the music, and the words no less,
Surely this is the home of every art,
And you are muses too, who charm the mind and heart."

XCIX.

"Our end," Diana said, "was art, the first,
And then, your pleasure, but we are content,
If art indeed has somewhat been aspersed,
So you applaud the labor we have spent."
On this the praises were again rehearsed,
Enlarged with what politeness might invent—
Then all withdrew to change the scenic vesture,
But Carolina stayed the Guardian with a gesture.

C.

"One word," she said, "for just your mortal ears—
In yonder ball-room, time will halt for me,
Until your quickening presence reappears
To cause the moments then too fast to flee.
If I say, Hope, the coming hour endears,
'Tis yours to make my Hope my Memory ;
I wear an azure hood, and silver bow,
And wait for you alone, is that too much to know?"

CI.

When the red iron worker strikes his blow,
A thousand little souls of fire are born,
They burst like roses and revolving go,
Wreathing the rib of steel whence they are torn ;
So, when the heart is struck in passion's glow,
A thousand springing loves the face adorn,
Each feature sparkles with its own delight,
And every trait betrays the animating might.

CII.

Thus, soul illumed, the smitten Guardian's face,
At her sweet emphasis beamed sudden joy,
The blood rushed o'er his ample forehead's space,
And flushed its fairness with a rich alloy.
"Oh mine," he answered, "blest the time, the place
Where I may yet the voice of love employ,
And when the splendor of those eyes on me,
May kindle burning words from breathing thoughts of thee."

CIII.

With all her winning elegance suffused,
She stood and bent her charming look on him :
Such was the pose a Phidias might have used,
To mold consent in every trait and limb ;
One fleeting blush her quickening heart accused,
Then like the sparkle on the wine cup's brim,
Or like the summer cloud of tinted spray,
She passed, and seemed to vanish more than move away.

CIV.

Meanwhile, Diana's footsteps, undelayed,
Reached the boudoir where Almai waiting stood ;
She held the vesture for the masquerade,
The light blue silken domino and hood ;
But, on the floor and with design displayed,
The mirror lay, all broken glass and wood.
"An accident Miss Dian," Almai said,
"Come not far in, I pray—be careful where you tread."

CV.

"I can throw on your domino, 'tis here—
 Oh you are lovely, be forever so,
 And happy too, my high-born lady dear.
 I draw the hood, I tie the satin bow :
 This purple rose I pin above your ear,
 Because, beneath the rose, in tones so low,
 So low and sweet, love's truest vows should glide,
 And those are thine to-night, thou darling Island's Pride."

CVI.

Then Almai pinned a silver rose. Alas !
 Why started she as 'twere a dagger stroke ?
 Why turned Diana sudden to the glass
 And paled to see it lying where it broke ?
 "Water !" she said, " nay, now the tremors pass,
 Why, what have I ? I felt my heart would choke,
 The thought of love—oh, speak not of it yet !
 There, let me go Almai—my mask—my eyes are wet."

CVII.

Now Carolina smiling, tripping light,
 Ran to the room where all her dress was placed ;
 The pale blue domino lay full in sight,
 But no white rose the azure satin graced.
 "Ah, rose !" cried Caroline, "unquiet sprite,
 Where are you hidden ? be not so shame-faced
 Because you signal love—What, roses none ?
 No silver rose, how strange !—Well, Dian must have one."

CVIII.

So Caroline threw on the domino
And ran all fluttering to Dian's door ;
" A silver rose, Diana, and I go—
Almai !" " A broken mirror, nothing more,
Here is a rose and let me pin it—so."
" Thanks nurse—the dearest rose I ever wore,
Adieu !"—" The dearest rose ! you say that well,
It will prove dear to you, dearer than you can tell."

CIX.

" Go ! with your purple rose you haughty slave,
To rival ne'er your sovereigns again ;
Aye, truly, you were better in your grave,
Than give Diana one more throb of pain :
She wept, poor child, the tear that I could save,
By hurling on you his, and her disdain ;
Your beauty cannot help, your reign is o'er,
You must not, shall not, live Diana's equal more."

CX.

Wrapped in a domino of simple serge,
Anon the Guardian mingled with the throng ;
Awhile he wandered on the spangled verge,
And watched the revel as it swept along ;
But still the music sounded like a dirge,
To which his heart replied a funeral song :
Unconquerable sadness seemed to lower,
That dimmed the pageant light and palled the coming hour.

CXI.

"Oh mask, I know you" sighed a fair Circassian,
"You are Prometheus, the son of morn,
One waltz with you were one celestial passion,
For you're a being worth the world forsworn.
Yonder infatuated drones of fashion
Are only made to whet the stings of scorn ;
But you shall peep at all my depths of feeling,
And gaze to set your philosophic brain a reeling."

CXII.

"Bright daughter of Circassia, not so fast,
And make no promise which you may regret ;
I'm but a son of night, my day is past,
And having lived it, I would now forget."
"Nay, that's a mood too savage, sir, to last,
Come wake with me to other mornings yet :
Hark ! 'tis a waltz, forego your wicked jest,
And whirl me through it with your own musician's zest."

CXIII.

"Not so," he said, "my dancing days have waned,"
"Come now," she laughed, "you think the dance degrades,
Why sage, it is the art the least profaned,
The simplest, quickest of expression's aids :
The graceful dance can only be disdained
When the last rose in life's bright visage fades."
"Well, that's my case, a bud of hope apart,
But think not graceful dame that I disdain your art."

CXIV.

"Nay, if there's motion of one perfect form,
'Tis the progression of the eddying waltz,
'Tis nature's movement in the wave, the storm,
And nature's movement in the starry vaults ;
Around each sun its whirling planets swarm,
Which each a crown of circling moons exalts,
And if, 'forever singing as they shine'—
Then, dancing as they move, may also be divine."

CXV.

Thus spoke the Guardian, but led not the dame,
For now emerging from the slackening dance,
A domino of blue and silver came,
Like Dian liveried in heaven's expanse.
Approaching like an undulating flame,
She darted through her mask a lambent glance,
Wild as those rays exhaled in summer night,
Which shot o'er copse and tarn, bewitch and baffle sight.

CXVI.

She drew more near, nor did her deep look swerve,
Till on his arm her satin hands she crossed ;
The touch electric thrilled from nerve to nerve,
And in her gaze he plunged his own and lost.
The form breathed love in every fold and curve,
And on the hood the silver rose was bossed.
'Tis Caroline he thought, these hands of pearl,
The shape, the step, betray that love inspiring girl.

CXVII.

"Fair," said the Guardian, glowing with delight,
"You are the image of a lovely moon,
At last arisen to dissolve my night,
An anxious night illumined none too soon."
"Ah! could my look put every shade to flight,
I'd ask that only gift as life's best boon,
But do you need me, you, so much above,
And do you love me, you, whom every one must love?"

CXVIII.

"Need you?" he answered, "love you? yes indeed,
No man can love you, cherish you like me."
"And is your heart from every other freed,
My own alone, as mine for you is free?"
"Aye, I ne'er loved, no, never knew the need,
Until you showed me what that need can be:
Love was to me a lifeless half scorned name,
Until your eyes revealed and wrote the word in flame."

CXIX.

"Celestial joy that is, for me to hear,
For if you love me, from this happy hour,
My life is full, my self-reproach and fear
Are gone forever with their icy power.
My tears could come indeed, but clearer, freer,
Beneficently like a summer shower;
If such could ever bathe my cheek of care,
The rose would always hide the deepest furrow there."

CXX.

“ And I am happy, you fulfill my hope,
This Lydian night can never find its mate ;
Indeed no more is night, no more we grope,
Nor flutter in the darkened webs of fate.
All luminous, henceforward, is our scope,
And bright the pleasures that our steps await,
What joy and pride to live with love and thee,
My Caroline—”

CXXI.

Eternal instant ! Then the mask upraised,
Which showed Diana and her piteous eyes.
With anger and remorse the Guardian gazed,
Yet gazed and struggled not to recognize,
Till Dian's face, less frightened than amazed,
Began to change as fear began to rise :
Then, paled her lips, her breath waned at each gasp,
While on her shrinking heart conviction fixed its grasp.

CXXII.

Her eyes grew blinded and her warm cheek froze
Her hands convulsive pressed her brow and face—
Then, slowly, memory's shattered train arose,
Their music, shipwreck, and that one embrace,
Those hours of sickness, all their joys and woes :
These filled her mind and gave each other place,
Pallid phantasmagoria of the past,
Vanished forever and this cruel one the last.

CXXIII.

"My God!" she whispered, "is my reason true,
This anguish, this humiliation mine? '
Guardian, have I been Caroline to you,
Were those words hers, must I my love resign?
But no, you said you loved me when you knew
'Twas I who listened yonder by the vine,
This very day. Oh! why that marble face,
Have I indeed lost all, love, life, in such disgrace?"

CXXIV.

The Guardian clasped Diana's rigid arm,
And led her unresisting steps apart.
"Come hither," said he, "quell this weak alarm,
And listen to the language of my heart;
Step through this window, see the night how calm,
We're free and still here, yon the dancers start;
Now in God's name Diana be resolved,
I will not bear the shame of resting thus involved.

CXXV.

"I love you like a sister, and no more,
Yet great that love is, would it could suffice,
Or would I ne'er again had seen the shore,
Where I insult you by its little price;
Take it or not, retain it or restore,
But hear at once what I will not say twice,
That Caroline and I have pledged to-day
A troth that both my honor and my will obey."

CXXVI.

Diana sank with one deep hollow groan,
Her heart no longer forced her blood to flow,
Her limbs, her senses, were no more her own,
And all her spirit yielded to the blow.
The Guardian sprang with bursting tear and moan,
But not for him was office to bestow ;
The window's drapery was thrust apart,
And Almai's outspread arms caught Dian to her heart.

CXXVII.

" Oh sweet Diana, oh, my loved, my best,"
The negress sobbed, convulsed with rage and grief.
" Art thou once more upon this faithful breast,
But withered like it, and in time so brief?
Murdered ! my lamb, and can my spirit rest,
Till full revenge has given thine relief?
No ! not though I lose Heaven and thee again !
My tears for thee my love, shall end in bloody rain.

CXXVIII.

But now, already blank or staring eyes,
And whispering voices spread confusion round,
The clustering groups with question and surmise,
Approached the balcony with masks unbound ;
A gloomy pall was widening o'er the skies,
Great drops began to fall, and thunder sound,
So quick we bore Diana to the room
And tried to bring again that ever exiled bloom.

CXXIX.

Lost that attempt, 'twas not to be restored,
But Dian opened her dark eyes again,
And launched their question to those eyes adored,
That softened with a sympathetic pain ;
But she read not the answer she implored,
Compassion's flood, but not deep passion's vein,
Had lightly made those sterile drops run o'er,
Whose flow could never feed the flower of hope once more.

CXXX.

But Almai saw the half returning life,
And madly anxious to sustain the tide,
Burst through the circle with impetuous strife,
And plunging to Diana's feet she cried :
" Live! Carolina cannot be his wife,
Ignoble, she can be no Saxon's bride,
Not yours, her mother, I attest the grave,
Hers, was like her, a nameless octoroon, a slave."

CXXXI.

Not for an instant was this disbelieved,
For e'en already gathering in the air,
Electric horror spread and bosoms heaved,
And that dumb nerve voice whispering beware,
Made any terror apt to be received.
Quick shuddering breezes made the candles flare,
The muttering thunder groaned and rolled more near,
While phantom lightning sheeted all the northern sphere.

CXXXII.

If, in some palace of a buried town,
A brilliant company had been entombed,
And fixed there, stark, in mail and robe and crown,
Till now from ash and scoria exhumed ;
Then, on those costumed bones could we look down,
And see their attitudes as they were doomed,
So, filled with spectres of a transfixed world,
Diana's halls appeared when Almai's words were hurled.

CXXXIII.

The beauteous Carolina, marble pale,
Lifted a brow that beamed as pure as dawn,
But spoke not, for what language could avail
To her surprised intensity of scorn ;
Yet, 'twas indeed a moment when to fail,
Would be the brightness of a life-time gone,
So, lightning quick, her lover grasped her hand,
And fixed the gaping crowd with eyes of real command.

CXXXIV.

The Guardian laughed, a long, cold, cutting laugh,
Like drawing keen steel from its curving sheath ;
" How, friends," he said, " the wine you deigned to quaff,
Has turned to vinegar behind your teeth ?
Look at this lady, she's my life's own half,
It is not I, but she, who weds beneath :
How can you stand there petrified that wise,
Behold that brow of snow, if you have ears, have eyes ?

CXXXV.

"Nay, wherefore stand I, even to deny,
What fear should make me argue or explain?
But were this true, and I could not reply,
Still Carolina were a slave in vain :
I'd buy her, free her, marry her, and fly,
Perhaps—for why should I deserve disdain?
What makes the noblest mate for any man,
If beauty, genius, heart cannot, tell me what can?"

CXXXVI.

As some tall palm, one fibre still unrent,
Waves upward to receive the final blast,
Diana swaying rose, and life unpent,
Burst in her gestures and her words the last :
"Take her," she said, "with all my soul's consent,
That noble girl is guiltless of the past,
And now, through me, her ill-starred birth is known,
Would that my father's crime had ruined me alone.

CXXXVII.

"Oh could my life-blood, ebbing while I speak,
Pass in her veins and expiate that crime,
Then would my heart not only meet, but seek,
This stroke of fate that fells me in my prime.
Forgive me Guardian that I am too weak,
Forgive me sister while there yet is time,
And hear my will, be free before I die,
And my last loving wish, be happier than I."

CXXXVIII.

A scarlet stream, the seal of that last will,
Tinged the pale lips that wreathed in love's last smile,
Diana sank : the broken heart was still
That beat so wildly, yet so free of guile.
Thus falls a lily, springing by a rill
Which feeds her beauty for a little while,
But grown a torrent, ravaging the soil,
Rends down her lovely form a pitiable spoil.

CXXXIX.

One gaze of inarticulate despair,
The negress fixed upon the beauteous corse,
Then like a tigress in her very lair,
Her velvet young ones torn from their life's source,
Her red eyes, lurid with a soulless glare,
Sprang for a victim with demoniac force :
A gleaming blade she wrested from her vest,
And aimed her murderous blow at Carolina's breast.

CXL.

Not slower than her desperate intent,
The Guardian leaped to intercept the aim,
Quick through his side the viewless dagger went,
And glided to the destined heart that came.
Speechless he stood, then trembled, drooped and bent,
And fell at Dian's feet a lifeless frame :
Without, there rang a bolt with thunderous din,
And paralyzing terror stunned the hearts within.

CXLI.

Then wild confusion swept the motley throng,
And panic rage of incoherent fright ;
Backward some fled, and others urged along,
Were hurled out shrieking in the furious night :
Some raised the victims, and a few more strong
Would have pursued the mad assassin's flight,
But she fled not, with frenzy in her eye,
She stood, prepared again to slay, prepared to die.

CXLII.

She stood incarnate death, inspiring fear,
Howling last curses with an idiot roar ;
Then, sudden from a spacious window near,
The light but volumed drapery she tore ;
She thrust it to a blazing chandelier,
And hurled the ignited mass upon the floor :
In tinder garments robed, the bravest shrank,
Till keen and rapid flame lit tapestry and plank.

CXLIII.

Then nought but safety was the impelling thought,
Yet vain for many that supreme desire,
The flame, storm brandished, waved aloft and caught,
And wrapped the structure in a robe of fire.
There those three lives so fated to consort,
Were merged in one, in that one funeral pyre ;
And tempests pass and mornings break with light,
But still yon wreck recalls that unforgotten night.

FINALE.



FINALE.

I.

GIVING the tale this melancholy close,
A sudden agitation seized my friend,
He bent his head, and then abruptly rose
And left me, why, I scarce could comprehend ;
Haply he figured in these joys and woes,
He knew these sisters, saw their tragic end,
Loved one perhaps. Still he came not again,
And I retired to dream of Dian and her train.

II.

Next day I saw my banker in an hour,
When little care the mighty man oppressed,
He offered me a true Cabana's flower,
Like one his own experienced lips caressed.
Emboldened by the sympathetic power,
Which fills the man who smokes another's best,
I said, " Excuse me, but I see you're free,
Pray tell me who is X—I mean his history ?

III.

"Last night he told me a long winded tale,
Yet left me curious to hear some more,
Not that the story did itself avail,
At least enough to merit an encore,
But then, to hear that cheery nightingale
Rehearse so sadly a nocturnal score,
And take a tragedy so much to heart,
I thought, 'twas in his time, he figured in a part.

IV.

"About those sisters, and that burnt up barn?"
"Oh yes," the banker said, "all true, but old,
Old as old X: so did he spin that yarn,
And yet leave out a thread of purest gold?
Well, then his spinning leaves somewhat to darn,
Though you have guessed exactly the untold,
For the old man did figure at that burn—
Nay, through the whole affair, a mixed up, bad concern.

V.

"It was a beastly luck I must confess—
I mean the fire, the girl they say was dead,
And yet he tried to save her none the less;
But, the other fellow whom the negress sped,
With stiffened fingers clung so to her dress,
So fast the flame on floor and wainscot spread,
That all his friends, who had themselves to save,
Could barely drag him from the fiery crumbling grave.

VI.

"He loved Diana : you recall the name,
She was the eldest, but they all were flirts,
At least, I knew them not, 'tis all the same,
For at the mildest they were those experts
Who know, and therefore love, to play their game :
Yet first-class sirens, give them their deserts.
And though a strong good favored craft was X,
You see they stranded him as fast as frailer wrecks.

VII.

"Poor man ! he may be eighty years this day,
Still, by that fire his gentle face is marred,
And still, no doubt you laugh to hear me say,
By that same quenchless love his heart is scarred ;
Well, they had genius in our island way,
And if they victimized, their fate was hard :
I hear you leave to-morrow.—Well, adieu !
Come down again I hope, we'll find you something new."

VIII.

The steamer surged, and at the close of day
The long blue hills were all the eye could paint,
Except, where mingling with the golden ray,
Still rose the ruin with its sad attaint.
Then dashed the bow against the open spray,
And hills and palms and ruins grew more faint
Till, lapsing from the grey horizon's swell,
Land disappeared at last, and night on ocean fell.

IX.

But sudden, at the coming of the gloom,
Out burst above, the cloudless starry throng ;
The sky was fretted with their silver bloom,
The sea sheened under as it rolled along :
The sunbeams laid in night's ethereal tomb
Seemed raised in spirits, numerous and strong,
While far and farther from unearthly space,
They flitted forth and filled their constellated place.

X.

Soon, by a chance, my eyes were fixed on three—
A lovely cluster, outlined as triune :
One glittered like an orb of frozen sea,
One shimmered like the rainbow of a June,
The third shone ruby, yet inconstantly,
Now Tyrian deep, now blushing, hueless soon ;
Yet all in equal splendor joined their rays
And one seemed peerless till another met the gaze.

XI.

These are the sisters, said I in my thought,
That glittering one is Anne, bright, cold as ice,
Like crystal with some warmth of color fraught,
And formed in grace though chiseled over nice ;
A reasoner she, but less inspired than taught,
A brilliant wit, but proud beyond advice,
A philosophic mind, a heart at zero,
Without one spark to make a heroine or hero.

XII.

The rainbow star—'tis Carolina sure,
Thereby the soul of genius is portrayed,
For, as the light, blent through a prism pure,
Breaks into every heavenly hue and shade—
So, nature seems refracted lovelier, newer,
When in the artist's heart, she's first, unmade,
Then, in his forms, his music, or his lines
Revives in deeper truth, with warmer beauty shines.

XIII.

The last is deep love, call it too, the heart,
But that wild heart which neither thinks nor dreams,
Which only feels, and, feeling without art
Hides no emotion by elaborate schemes.
The fluctuating blush, the sigh, the start,
The instant pulse that varies to extremes
These are its signals not to be withheld,
The ruby ray will shine e'en dim, yet never quelled.

XIV.

'Tis Dian's star, and is the light despised?
Nay, let the three one evening shine alone—
Then ask the wanderer which is highest prized!
If all be bright, the choosing is his own,
And fancy's star will be the recognized.
But when the rising storm obscures the zone,
What last light gleams athwart the clouds o'erspread?
'Tis still the ruby ray when all the rest are fled.

XV.

Thus, as I mused, a cloud indeed arose
And soon eclipsed my stars behind its loom,
And this, I murmured ever is the close—
All ultimately vanishes in gloom ;
But then the sea begat those actual woes
Which, as we know, give no ideal, room :
I sought my berth, forgot the tropic strand,
And prayed devoutly for my blessed native land.



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